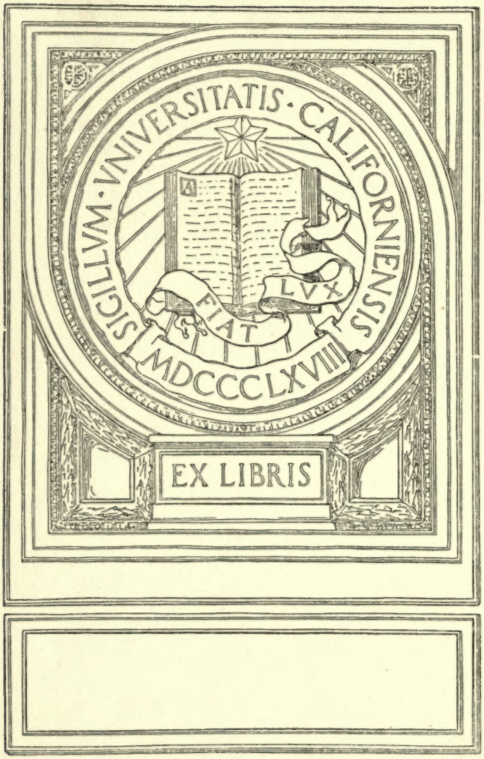

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LATE OF BOSTON, MASS.

NOW OF CLEVELAND, OHIO,

Editor, Composer, Vocalist and Musician,

WITH SINCERE FEELINGS

OF FRIENDSHIP AND ESTEEM,

THIS WORK IS INSCRIBED,

BY THE AUTHOR.

Philadelphia, February 28, 1857.

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THE BORDER ROVER.

CHAPTER I.

LEAVING HOME.

I BELIEVE it is customary, when an individual sets out to write an autobiography, to begin at the beginning—that is to say, with his first recollection—and give a detailed account of the passing of his earliest years. I shall not adopt this plan; because, in the first place, the earlier years of my existence were not marked with events of peculiar interest to the reader; and in the second place, my narrative is intended merely as a chronicle of the most remarkable scenes and adventures through which I passed after arriving at the age of manhood. It may not be improper, however, to devote a few words to my birth, parentage and past life, in order to fairly introduce myself to the reader, with whom it is my design to make a rather long, and I hope agreeable, journey.

I was born in the city of Philadelphia, and am the youngest child of four, and an only son. My father,

Colonel Rivers, was a highly respected importing merchant; and though now retired from the cares of business, is still living; as are, also, my mother and two of my sisters—the last mentioned being married and settled in the city of my nativity—and both of their husbands, I may add, are active partners in what was once the house of Rivers & Co. It was the cherished design of my father to have me succeed him in business, and so perpetuate the firm, which first took its name from his father and father-in-law; for my father married the daughter of Lemuel Roland, the co-partner of my grandfather Rivers, and I was appropriately christened Roland, the surname of my mother: I say it was the cherished design of my father that I should succeed him in business, and certainly it was reasonable in him to wish to see the firm of Rivers & Co. carried down at least another generation. Moreover, I took a youthful pride in the knowledge that I had a legal right to support and extend a mercantile title begun with my ancestors on both sides, and so harmoniously cemented; and could I, on arriving at the proper age, have been contented with an even, peaceful business-life, the darling hope of my worthy father would have been realized.

But, unfortunately for this design, there was a restless something implanted in my very nature which demanded change, even in my earlier years, and rapidly grew and developed with my growth, till at last inclination and desire became too strong for reason and judgment. In my school-boy days I bat-

tled against it; and a thousand times, when treading the venerable counting-room of my father, did I resolve to conquer, and force contentment with my lot. A thousand times did I mentally say, "The firm of Rivers & Co. shall never be changed while I have being;" and a thousand times did some evil genius seem to whisper, "You will never tread in the footsteps of your honored predecessors."

Why could I not be contented while surrounded by the luxuries of wealth? Why came that incessant longing for change, which made unhappy my waking hours, and mingled ever in my dreams? Had I a destiny to fulfil, which would take me far from home and friends, and surround me with hardships and perils, and bow with grief the venerable heads most dear to me? I shuddered at the thought, and yet felt that the thought was only the precursor of the reality.

My father, though ever willing to indulge me in any and every rational and reasonable pastime, was withal too strict a disciplinarian of the old school to permit a single hour of the twenty-four to pass in what might be termed sheer idleness. Every minute had to be as strictly accounted for as if every minute were a dollar. Though wealthy to an extent which cast many so-called opulent families in the shade, it was a principle with him to have his children instructed in every branch of learning and labor which was likely to be of use to them, in the event of being reduced to a state of comparative poverty. A

thorough business-working man himself, he did not, like too many indulgent fathers, think his children of so superior a mould as to be disgraced by honest toil. On the contrary, his daughters were taught to manage the kitchen as well as adorn the parlor, and I often found my task with clerks of the lowest salary; and in my rough, worsted roundabout, with my labor-soiled hands and face, was not unfrequently mistaken for one of them, by pompous, perfumed, and dashingly dressed customers. I had my hours for schooling, recreation and labor; and though I sometimes thought the last unnecessary and degrading, yet I knew too well my father's inflexible adherence to system, to think of remonstrating. I thus began to labor so young that I remember not a period of idleness; and sorely was my pride many times wounded, during the years of my minority, by seeing the sons of clerks better dressed and having more freedom than the only son of a princely merchant. But I have lived to thank my father for his upright course, for it saved me perhaps from dissipation, and certainly from many a temptation, and begot habits of manly, energetic activity and self-dependence, in contradistinction to effeminate indolence and infantile helplessness, which so generally curse the lives of rich men's sons. Would to Heaven, for the good of mankind, that every father were like mine in this respect!

I rose, by degrees, from the position of a hard-working clerk—the common packer of bales and boxes—to be assistant book-keeper in my father's

counting-room; and two years at the desk made me thoroughly acquainted with his system of doing business and the extensive operations of the establishment. I had now completed my twentieth year, and another twelve-month would see me my own master, and, as my father most ardently hoped, the head of the house; for it had been his favorite project for years, to celebrate his retirement from business and my succession on my twenty-first anniversary. How he was doomed to disappointment, which almost broke his heart, I shall presently show.

I have spoken of a restless desire for change, beginning with my earlier years, growing upon me with my growth, and strengthening with my strength. Notwithstanding my constant and arduous employment, and my earnest striving to be contented in the envied position where fortune had placed me, I could not control or govern my fancy, which, during every unoccupied moment, awake or asleep, was continually roving far, far away, to some unknown region beyond my natural view. Yet my desire did not extend to Oriental lands—the pomp and degradation, the splendor and misery of ancient cities—but to the grandeur and solitude of nature; of nature unchanged by art; of nature wild, free, primitive; of nature as found on the ocean, the desert, the prairie, or the rocky steeps of the howling wilderness. Vainly did I struggle to crush this desire, which I kept locked in my breast; vainly did I bring reason, filial affection, pride, ambition, and all the opposing faculties of which I was

master, to bear against it; the never-ceasing voice within—a voice like that which bade the Wandering Jew move on—cried, "Go! go! go!"

Discontented and unhappy for years, I now grew melancholy and abstracted. I could not relish my food; my sleep became broken and feverish; and my pale, sickly complexion, hollow eyes, and sudden, nervous starts, gradually betrayed my mental sufferings. For a long time my father seemed not to notice the change—a change which I remarked with regret—and concerning which, when questioned by my mother, or some of my intimate friends, I made evasive replies, and added a forced laugh, to imply it was nothing serious.

At last, one day, my father called me aside, and with considerable show of feeling, said:

"Roland, you are not well!"

"I certainly do not feel well," I answered, for with him I was resolved to be frank.

"I have for some time remarked a change in you," he continued; "and I perceive you get thinner every day, although you evidently struggle to overcome your disease, whatever it may be. Is your mind at ease?"

"Why do you ask, father?"

"Because, in your case, I fancy I detect a mental anxiety with which the body sympathizes."

My father, it will thus be seen, had observed me closely, and with a discernment for which I had not given him credit.

"I cannot say that my mind is at ease," I replied to his question.

"Well, Roland, speak out, and frankly."

"I will, father. I feel that I am too much confined here. I long for travel—for change."

"And where would you go, my son?"

"Anywhere," I replied, eagerly, "so that the journey be long; but I would prefer"—

"Well," he said, as I hesitated, "what would you prefer?"

I thought of the Western prairies, of which I had recently read some glowing accounts, and had frequently seen in my dreams, and felt prompted to name them as my destination; but a moment's reflection convinced me that I should thus be asking a favor which would be refused, and I instantly substituted:

"I would go westward."

"A long journey westward!" he repeated, musingly, and closely eyeing me the while; "that is rather a vague request. I really do not like to spare you, for in less than three months now you will be of age, and then, you know, I intend to put the responsibility of the house on your shoulders. But, really, you need rest and change, and so I have a mind to send you to St. Louis, to settle a long standing account with Willard & Brothers."

"Do, father, please!" I eagerly rejoined, while my nerves seemed to thrill with rapture, and my blood to leap wildly through my veins; for the city which he

intended for my destination, only rested in my mind as the way-mark to a longer journey.

"You seem excited, Roland," said my father; "I have not seen your eyes so sparkle, and so much color in your face, for a long time. Are you really so delighted at leaving home?"

"Pardon me, father! I really was not thinking of the parting from you and mother; but of the delights of travel and change."

"You will not find the journey so delightful as you anticipate, my son; but experience will best prove the truth of my words. But you must not disappoint me of your presence here on your birth-day. I have looked forward to that point of time for many years, and your absence would make it a day of gloom instead of a day of rejoicing."

I made no reply, and my eye sought the ground, for my heart acknowledged the guilt of deceiving a parent I loved and venerated. My father probably mistook the expression for one resulting from a far different cause, for he immediately inquired:

"When would you like to start, Roland?"

"As soon as you think proper, father."

"Let me see—this is Friday. Be ready to leave on Monday next."

The night following this decision I could not sleep. I lay tossing to and fro, my fancy revelling in the delights of unbounded freedom, and my heart heavy with a half-formed design of doing wrong. Should I thus go forth to return at some distant period, or per-

chance to return no more? Could I bid my kind parents farewell with a lie in my heart, if not upon my tongue? Had I been so carefully and fondly reared, to be the instrument, in the hands of Fate, to strike a cruel blow against the happiness of those I loved? Should I let selfish desire, with one fell swoop, bear down every principle of right and honor, reason, duty and love? But then, the glowing pictures of fancy —how bright, how beautiful, how enchanting they rose before my mind's vision! A green earth, with gorgeous flowers, a balmy air, a blue sky, and a glorious sun, with the freedom of the untamed eagle, seemed stretching away beyond the narrow path of duty. Should I not for once overstep its circumscribed limits, and let my soul feast, and fill, and expand with the divine of nature? Should I not rise superior to any earthly tie—strained but not severed —for the reward of a life-long gratification? Well, I could not say—I could not decide. There was weight and force on either side; and, set in motion by doubt, they rocked the mind till every fount of feeling cast troubled waters to the surface.

I will not detain the reader with the tedium of preparation, or the scenes of parting. All separations from those we love, when a long future, with its fearful uncertainties, stretches between the present and the point of probable reunion, are periods of trial; and the heart pours forth its gathered affections with the truth and purity of something holy, and then struggles in anguish to recover the vitality which has

gone from it, as the virtue went forth from the Great Master.

The parting from my parents and friends was the more trying to me, that I felt guilty of a deception concerning my return; for already I knew myself secretly yielding to the temptation of a prolonged absence; and once away, and the poignancy of parting dulled by time, I could not say to what extent the power of desire might prevail over affection and duty.

"Something tells me you will not speedily return," said my mother, with maternal tenderness, a tear glistening in her eye. "You are going from home for the first time, Roland, and may your journey prove a safe and pleasant one! Take care of your health, and avoid temptation, and may Heaven bless and prosper you!"

"Remember my instructions, and bring not disappointment to my hope!" said my father, as he grasped my hand for the last time.

My heart was full; my eyes were dim; and silently turning away, I sprung into the carriage, and was rapidly whirled from the most touching scene which had ever been presented in my then uneventful existence.

CHAPTER II.

THE OLD TRAPPER.

YEARS have glided down the stream of time into the great ocean of the past, since I first bade adieu to friends and home—years teeming with events that stand out in my memory like mountains from a plain —and yet vivid, as if they were of yesterday, is the recollection of the sensations I expericnced when first rejoicing in the liberty for which my imprisoned spirit had so ardently longed. The first keen mental pangs of parting over, and I felt as if I had entered upon a new existence. My soul seemed to soar into boundless regions of eternal sunlight, and every nerve thrilled with a rapture indescribable. With what emotions did I view the scene below me from some lofty summit of the Alleghanies! With what enchantment did the picture of hill and vale and silver stream, mellowed by distance, and reposing in a dreamy atmosphere of blue, present itself to my vision! while green leaves waved above me, bright flowers bloomed beside me, and forest minstrels all around me filled my ear with music! It was the spring of the year, and the spring of my soul; and I looked up at the bright sun, and inhaled the pure air, and thanked God I had a conscious being among the beauties of His creation.

My journey to St. Louis was marked with no incidents worthy of record. I formed no acquaintance with any of my fellow travellers, and took no part nor interest in the amusements with which many of them whiled away a goodly portion of their time, as we steamed down the beautiful Ohio and up the turbid waters of the Mississippi. The time unoccupied by sleep, I mostly spent on the upper deck, filled with a delight that sought no vent in words, at the constant change presented to my view. It seemed as if I could never weary of the green lawns, the shady groves, the gentle undulations, made picturesque by thriving villages and solitary dwellings, which margined La Belle Riviere for hundreds of miles; and even when these charming scenes were lost, by entering upon the Father of Rivers, I found a new source of delight in the contemplation of that mighty body of water, rolling on in stern, gloomy grandeur, year after year, and age after age, unceasing, eternal, to mingle its collected thousands of fresh water streams with the briny waves of the Gulf.

I arrived at St. Louis much improved in health and spirits. I felt that my journey, with change of clime and scene, had infused a new life into my whole being; and I only seemed to need the consent of my parents to prolong that journey into the great wilderness of the West, to render my happiness complete.

But could that consent be obtained? And if not, should I venture to go without it? On leaving home, as the reader knows, I had partially resolved not to

return until I had in reality, as I often had in fancy, visited the great prairies; and now I began to fear lest the combined sin of filial disobedience and deception should meet with a just retribution, and for several days my mind was much troubled concerning my future course. I could not bear the thought of returning to the toil of a business unsuited to the bent of my mind, and for which I felt a strong repugnance; I did not believe my father would yield his consent to the project I had in view, and which would necessarily destroy his long-cherished hope; and to act in disobedience to his wishes and commands, seemed little short of a crime.

Under the circumstances, what was I to do? True, I should soon be of age; a few more weeks, and I should have a right, according to the laws of man, to prosecute my desire; but should I have any more right, according to the laws of God, to strain, if not sever, the ties of parental affection, and add a heavy weight of sorrow to the weight of years of those I loved? No! I could not set forth into the wilderness with a painful feeling of self-condemnation. Honor, duty, gratitude and love demanded a sacrifice of my selfish purpose—and I would make it. I would return—I would relinquish my brightest hope, or reserve my design for a more fitting period.

With this decision my mind became tranquil, and I sought and found enjoyment in everything around me. Now that I had removed the cloud from my spirit, nature seemed to wear a more cheerful aspect.

The sun shone brighter, the air grew purer, and the breeze blew softer. I turned my eyes longingly toward the west, sighed a farewell to my desire, and believed I had conquered myself. Alas! how little do we know ourselves! If it be true that we know not our friends till we have tried them, it is equally true that we know not the strength of our own resolves till we have put them to the test.

My business with Willard & Brothers occupied a portion of my time for a couple of weeks. During that period, however, I had leisure to ramble about the city and its environs; and when the ostensible purpose for which I had left home was accomplished, I found myself ready to set out upon my return. With this view I one day repaired to the steamboat landing, intending to select a boat to my liking, and engaged a passage to Louisville or Cincinnati. As chance, or fate, or Providence would have it—for by some one of these terms we are wont to designate whatever happens unexpectedly, or with that coincidence which seems to tend to a mysterious design and bears upon the supremacy of our present or future good or ill—as chance would have it, I say, in strolling along the landing, I espied a steamer about to start on its periodical voyage up the Missouri, its final destination being Fort Leavenworth. Without the remotest intention of engaging a passage, and only prompted by an idle curiosity, I stepped on board. I found the firemen busy in engendering steam, and learned that in the course of an hour the

boat would be under way. Several passengers were lounging about the decks and cabin, and among them a few whose dress and appearance indicated a long familiarity with the prairie and the wilderness.

Here then came temptation in another guise. Why not extend my journey to the borders of that region I so longed to explore? I could return with the boat, and have plenty of time to reach home before my birth-day. And besides, I fancied I could derive much gratification, and increase my knowledge of wild western life, by a conversation with men who had spent years beyond the limits of civilization and law, and who had perhaps seen the fierce savage on his native soil and the wild beasts in their very lairs. In short, I was resolved to go; and a few minutes sufficed to put my baggage on the steamer, and within an hour I was gliding up the great river on a still westward journey.

It was natural, under the circumstances, that I should seek an early occasion to form something of an acquaintance with these daring and hardy borderers; and for this purpose, as soon as the boat was fairly under way, I descended to the lower deck, where I found a single party, with a pack of greasy cards, already deeply absorded in the popular game of euchre, a small amount of money being staked, just to make it interesting. They had drawn up some salt bags for seats, around a box of goods, which served them for a table, and were as intently engaged as if life and death depended on the result—therefore

it was out of the question for me to think of interrogating them. A little further on was a small party of soldiers, on their way out to the Fort, under the charge of a very pompous little sergeant, who seemed determined to keep them apart from all persons not in the line military, and allow them as little liberty as if on a regular drill. It was amusing to me —though probably not to those to whom his word was law—to see this little officer strutting about, and occasionally giving orders to this one and that, with the air of a general directing the movements of an army. I could not avoid smiling at his peacock attitudes; and chancing to observe me, he frowned as heavily as his little forehead and thin eyebrows would permit, and putting on some extra dignity, and crossing his arms *a la* Napoleon, he remarked, in a general way, though looking fiercely at me the while:

"It is a —— pity that ignorant civilians have not been under that system of discipline which teaches every man to mind his own business!"

At this I laughed aloud, and attracted the attention of the whole military corps. Some of the men smiled, and gave me a mischievous wink, unseen by the pompous little sergeant, who immediately turned his back upon me with an air of supreme contempt.

Near the stern of the boat was a party of German emigrants, some forty in number—men, women and children—on their way to take possession of a government purchase, which in their hands would doubtless become a thriving settlement in a few years. There

were a few other rough specimens of the frontier, lounging about in various attitudes; but none, save the card-playing party, that seemed by their peculiar dress and appearance to be familiar with that life in the remote wilderness which for me had all the attractions of genuine romance, and concerning which I was so eager to obtain further information.

After sauntering up and down the after deck some two or three times, to the no small annoyance of my particular friend, the little sergeant—who, in seamen's phrase, took care to give me a wide berth—I finally seated myself near the players, and carefully scanned their dress and equipments—in which, for reasons already stated, I found myself far more deeply interested than in the fluctuations of a game I did not understand.

These mountaineers, as I will term them—for under this term are generally classed all those who live a free, roving life beyond the settlements, whether professional hunters, trappers, traders, or guides—these mountaineers, I say, were four in number, and were all distinguished by that costume which has become a peculiarity of these wilderness-wanderers, who oftener see the moving villages of the savages, than the stationary villages of those of their own blood and race. As many of them are, in fact, only so many connecting links between the white man and the red, so their dress partakes something of the character of both civilization and barbarism; and one description, with perhaps a trifling variation, the result of some whim of the owner, will answer for the whole class.

A hunting shirt of dressed buckskin, ornamented with long fringes, covers the breast and arms, and descends to about half way between the hip and knee. This is left full and loose about the breast and shoulders, but tightened around the waist by a strong belt, either of the same material, black leather, or wampum, as the taste of the wearer may decide. This belt generally supports a sheath of buffalo hide, into which is thrust a large hunting-knife, with the haft most convenient to the hand; and a little buckskin case, containing a whetstone, is also considered an indispensable attachment. His powder-horn and bullet-pouch—in which latter he carries his balls, flint, steel, et cetera—are supported under his right arm, by a belt passing transversely across his breast and back and over his left shoulder; and around his neck is suspended his pipe-holder, not unfrequently the wampum-worked keepsake of some love-stricken Indian maid. His pantaloons, also of dressed buckskin, are ornamented, down the outside of the legs, with porcupine quills and long fringes, and a flexible felt hat and moccasins complete his singular attire. A long, heavy rifle is his never-failing accompaniment; and sometimes a brace of pistols and a tomahawk are added for defence.

For some half an hour, I sat and watched the four hardy and weather-browned mountaineers, as they continued to play at what an old gentleman, who had been fleeced by some gamblers, once very truthfully described to his son, as "a most infernal game, in

which the jack takes the ace." It was interesting to watch the expressions which made joyous or doleful the faces of the players, as the game continually alternated in favor of an opponent; and the eagerness with which success was hailed by the different parties, showed clearly that each considered his reputation at stake as well as his money. They said little, but they looked volumes.

Two of the party were comparatively young men, their ages ranging from twenty-five to thirty; but the other two were verging upon fifty, and had evidently seen hard service; for their well-tanned skins showed more than one broad scar, to which evidently belonged a thrilling tale of desperate encounter with man or beast. Oh! how impatient was I to get these old mountaineers into conversation! for to my natural desire for a description of the wild life beyond the borders, was added a very troublesome curiosity to know something of their personal history. But as it was folly to expect them to quit a game of such exciting interest, to gratify the whim of a stranger they had not yet noticed in any way, and as others, some boat hands and some passengers, began to collect around them, actuated by an entirely different curiosity than mine, I concluded to withdraw and abide an auspicious opportunity.

I therefore strolled to the forward deck, intending to amuse myself by looking up the broad river; but what was my surprise and delight, to find here another mountaineer, sitting cross-legged upon the floor,

and busily engaged in repairing a half worn-out moccasin!

Here was the very opportunity for a private conversation which I had so much desired, and it may readily be believed I lost no time in addressing him. Gently dropping down by his side, in a careless attitude, I said, in a very bland tone:

"Pardon me, sir, if I intrude upon you; but really, I have a great curiosity concerning all that pertains to one of your profession."

The old trapper, for such he was—old at least in experience, and his age could not have been less than fifty—the old trapper, I say, raised his head slowly, and presented to my view a face, which, had I never seen it again, I should never have forgotten. Its color was a dark, dingy red; and over the lower part were patches of coarse, grizzly beard, which seemed to be making desperate efforts to keep neighborly, and overshadow several very frightful-looking scars. One corner of his mouth was drawn down in a very comical way; and two round white spots, one on either cheek, showed where a bullet had passed through, performing a very sudden, but none the less disagreeable, dental operation. The tip of his nose had been chipped off, one eye gouged out, and a long scar, across the base of the forehead, made a very ugly substitute for eyebrows. His one eye was small, shrewd, black and keen; and this took a very careful survey of my features and person, before its owner deigned to honor me with a reply. Meantime, I

glanced from his face to his hands, which were dingy, rough and scarred—and I further noticed that he was lank, bony, and muscular—being altogether, as I thought, a pretty hard specimen of an Indian fighter, but certainly no Apollo.

"Stranger," he said at length, in a very queer tone —for the accidents of his life had evidently injured his voice, which seemed to be pitched upon a key between a squeal and a grunt—"Stranger, whar do you hail?"

"You wish to know my native place?" I said, inquiringly.

"Raythe r."

"I was born in Philadelphia."

He gave a grunt and resumed his work.

"I see you are repairing your moccasins, probably for another long journey into the wilderness?" I resumed, determined to draw him into conversation.

This time he did not even grunt, but continued his work, without taking any further notice of me. Well, thought I, this is a very interesting beginning, and if I keep on, I shall perhaps be as wise as when I left home. I felt a little nettled, and made my next remark rather pointed.

"Is it a fact, that a life in the wilderness transforms a gentleman into a boor?" I inquired.

His one eye slowly left his work, and, beginning at my feet, continued its survey upward, till it reached my face, where it seemed to fasten, while the lips articulated:

"Stranger, what's the sign?"

"I don't understand you," I replied.

"A draw-game, then, by ——!" he rejoined, again resuming his occupation.

Determined not to be baffled in this way, I said, rather sharply:

"Will you, or will you not, answer a few civil questions?"

"What for?"

"For my gratification."

"Your what?"

"For my gratification. I have a strong desire to hear something about the wilderness, from one who, like yourself, has evidently spent much of his life there."

"Kin you wet?" he inquired, with a sly look from his one eye.

"Can I wet."

"Expect."

"Please explain your singular expression."

"A dry mouth wets. Augh!"

"Oh, you wish me to stand treat?"

"Raythor."

"By all means; what will you drink?"

"Half a pint."

"Of what?"

"Red-eye."

"What is that?"

"Whiskey."

"Certainly," said I; and hurrying to the bar in the saloon, I procured a tumbler full of his favorite beverage, and returned to my eccentric friend.

His eye glistened as he received it; and putting the glass to his lips, one half of the contents suddenly disappeared. With a satisfied grunt, he placed the tumbler on the deck; and then turning to me, with a half-sympathetic, half-quizzical expression, he said:

"Stranger, you're decent, but powerful green."

I hardly knew whether to get angry or not; but finally forced out a laugh, though I did not see the joke.

"I trust, with the aid of the liquor," I said, "you will be able to overlook my imperfections."

"Right, thar, stranger—your decency shall kiver your greenness to old One-Eyed. Blaze away!"

"To begin, then, what is your profession?"

"What this hyer old nigger does to fill his meat-trap, d'ye mean?"

"Yes."

"I cotch beaver, and raise ha'r."

"What kind of hair—beaver's?"

"No, Injin's. You'll spile, stranger, you will—chaw me."

"Never mind me," I said, rather testily; "I may be green in your eye, but I flatter myself I am not a fool for all that."

"Some'at to punks in your natyve village, hey?" he replied, with a quizzical grin.

"*I* think so, at all events."

"Expect."

"Can you not tell me something about the prairies—their grandeur and beauty?" I continued.

"I goes under thar, stranger—haint the needful. I kin throw a red-nigger, or a bull buffler, at long range, and set a beaver trap to the next; but hyer's a coon as al'ays gins in when it kims to the fancy Augh!"

"That is your green spot then," I said, mischievously.

"Wall, it mought be," he replied, with a good-natured laugh, taking up the tumbler; "but this hyer old one-eyed nigger won't spile—nary once—chaw me!"

"Not if whiskey can save you," I rejoined, as he set down an empty glass. "I must tell you," I proceeded, "I have for years felt a strong desire to visit the great wilderness of the West; and everything that pertains to that vast region has for me a romantic fascination."

"Stranger, you're right thar," returned the old trapper, with something like enthusiasm. "You're right thar, younker, and old One-Eyed Sam'll gamble on to that. The perrairie and mountains is the only spots whar a feller kin git fresh air; and him as haint lived thar, haint lived no whar—but has jest smoked it out in the settlements. Augh! how I hate them brick and mortar fixings—cramping a feller up so's he has to grow crooked, and can't lay straight to nights. Stranger, I never seed St. Louey, that I didn't wonder how sich a heap of infernal scamps and fools got planted together fur a choke. Augh!"

"And yet St. Louis is a small city, compared with Philadelphia," said I.

"'Tis, hey?" he replied, looking wistfully at the empty tumbler. "Wall, stranger, I'd jest like to wet agin on to your good sense in putting out."

"Oh, by all means!" returned I, laughing; and I hastened to procure another half pint.

"Younker," he said, as he again received the full tumbler from my hands, "if it wasn't fur this hyer, old One-Eyed Sam 'ud spile every time he seed them thar —— brick cabins, sure;" and down went the first half of the fiery and exhilarating contents. "Augh!" he pursued, smacking his lips; "that thar's the stuff; and a few stiffs to them al'ays fotches old Sam on to his pegs. So Phila-what-d'ye-call-it, beats St. Louey, hey?"

"As six to one."

"That's all right, expect—but hyer's a beaver as don't see the sign—nary once. Augh!"

"Well, then, to give you an illustration that you will understand," I rejoined, "Philadelphia is as much superior to St. Louis, in point of size, as six half pints of whiskey are to one."

The old trapper eyed me sharply for a while, as if he thought I might be playing upon his credulity; and then, apparently satisfied of my sincerity, he scratched his head and looked puzzled. At length he rejoined:

"Wall, chaw me up fur a liar, ef I kin see how you all draw breath thar, and git your feed. Now to this

hyer old hoss, what's used to stretching my legs and swinging my arms, without kicking and hitting nobody, this hyer country feels orful close—some'at to a b'ar-hug; but penned up whar you tell me about, I'd strangulate; ef I wouldn't, why war cubs made?"

"I suppose you are now on your way to the wilderness?" I said, inquiringly.

"You kin gamble on to that thar."

"Are you in company with the party playing cards yonder?"

"Nary once. I've got a pardner though, but old Brimstone hisself couldn't fotch him nigh a city. He thinks he's gwine to spile whensomever he gits to Independence; and ef thar's business to St. Louey, I've got to do the tramp alone. Augh!"

"How long have you been in the beaver trade?"

"Six foot one."

"No, I mean how many years?"

"Wall, chaw me up fur a liar, ef I don't expect I went in the next day arter I was born—leastways, ef I didn't, I mought hev did it, fur anything I kin remember about it now."

"I see, by your scars, you have been through some perilous scenes."

"Why, yes, stranger, I've fit in, and fit out, a few, you kin gamble on to that; but I tell you what it is, no —— red nigger ever raised my h'ar—though I've took top-knots enough to make a lariat on—I hev—chaw me!"

"I should be delighted to hear you describe one of your fights with the Indians—Will you gratify me?"

"Whar you bound?"

"Just making a trip to Fort Leavenworth."

"Ef you has sich a like for the perraries, why don't you jest sun yourself out thar?"

"I should like to do so, but my father would not give his consent."

One-Eyed Sam gave a contemptuous grunt, and rejoined:

"At your time I hadn't no master. Augh!"

"My father is not my master," I replied, quickly, feeling a good deal nettled; "but I respect and love him, and therefore would do nothing to displease him, or cause him sorrow."

"Every body to thar likes, but the wilderness for this hyer nigger!" responded my new acquaintance.

"And for me, too, could I have my wish," said I.

"How old, younker?"

"Almost twenty-one."

"Fust time out hyer?"

"Yes."

"And never seed a perrarie?"

"Never."

"Never 'mongst bufflers?"

"Never."

"Never raised h'ar?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"Scalped a Injin."

"Never."

"Then, stranger, you hain't lived, and you is only fit for wolf-meat. Augh!"

Strange as it may seem, I felt lowered in my own estimation by this reply of the old trapper; for I saw that, from his point of observation and calculation, I was a mere cipher in existence. His world was the wilderness, beyond which there was nothing worth living for; and however much superior I might be to him in my own peculiar sphere, yet in all that pertained to his, I was forced to acknowledge my inferiority, and I did it with a conscious blush of shame. At home I should have looked upon him as a human curiosity—rough, low-bred, and vulgar, in whom the animal greatly predominated over the intellectual—and, as such, scarcely worth more regard than a half-civilized Indian—between whom, and one of my education, there could be no comparison that would do him credit; but here, bordering on a country where the animal and its instincts, united with physical force, held a supremacy over inexperience of peril and the knowledge gained from books, I was humiliated at the reflection that there was not a single event in my even, monotonous, city life, the relation of which would excite his admiration; while he, on the contrary, as proclaimed by his disfiguring scars, was the envied hero of perhaps a hundred bold encounters, whose simple narration would cause my hair to rise, and the blood to leap through my veins with a wild thrill.

He noticed my confusion, and saw that I felt the

sting of his remark; and with a delicacy for which I had not given him credit, he promptly added:

"But I sees you've got grit and speret, boy; and ef I only had you out with me for one tramp, I could larn ye some'at, and make ye useful."

"And how far are you going?" I eagerly inquired, feeling strongly tempted to break my last resolution, and not return till I could speak from experience of life in the Far West.

"Jest over a piece fur now."

"And when do you expect to return?"

"Thar I goes under. Dont like this hyer country, no how. Augh!"

"Are you going alone?"

"Me and Jake Stericks is all—him as is to Independence—my pardner."

"Would you take me along?"

"Jest to keep you from spyling."

"But could I get back by fall?"

"Expect."

"I could join some party on their return?"

"Expect."

"Will you pass any of the forts?"

"Bent's."

"I am tempted to accompany you as far as there, at all events," said I.

"Green, but kin be seasoned!" was the sententious rejoinder of One-Eyed-Sam, as he raised the tumbler, with a nod and a leer, and sent the remainder of the pint past the bullet marks.

CHAPTER III.

A NEW FRIEND.

It is fair to conclude, from my own experience in observing the different grades of the *genus homo*, that one pint of whiskey in a human being will either make him very loquacious, or seal up his organs of speech. Much to my chagrin, the effect of my liberality on One-Eyed Sam was of the latter kind; for from the moment the last drop disappeared, he became very stupid, and I could get no further rational answers to my questions. But he had started an idea in keeping with my desire, which I felt there could be no harm in giving serious consideration; and so I left him, and repaired to my state-room, where, stretching myself in my berth, I held quite an argument with myself, concerning the propriety of extending my travels beyond the limits I had laid down in my mind at the time of taking passage on board the boat which was now bearing me further from home. The first thing I considered was, the anxiety with which my father would look for my return, and the disappointment he would experience in not having me present at the time he had appointed for his emancipation from the cares of a long mercantile life; and secondly, how I could avoid being present on my birth-day, and not have a too serious account to settle with my

conscience. I could write to him and say, that my health not being perfectly restored—which was true—I had thought it best, all things considered, to take a trip across the prairies, intending to be absent only the summer season, and reach home early in the fall; and having got my conscience to side with me in this arrangement, I leaped from my berth, and hastened to execute the letter-writing portion of my new-formed design.

I dated my letter on board the steamer Missouri; and, after entering into a good deal of round-about detail, came to the important point, and supported it with so much logical force, that I was quite surprised myself, on reading it over, to perceive how strong a case I had made out in my own favor, and how discreetively and reasonably I had met all objections which might, could, would, or should be raised against my doing exactly as I desired. Having finished, read, and superscribed the epistle, I held another very anxious debate with myself as to whether I should send it or not. I could step on shore, at some of the villages on the route, and put it in the post; but as I already began to suspect myself of being rather fickle-minded, I thought it advisible to keep it in my possession till such time as I should arrive at a positive decision.

It will thus be seen, that, having surmounted the one great obstacle to the gratification of my desire, conscientious scruples, I had rather a down-hill path to travel; and once started, I moved over the ground

with accelerated motion. I was not wanting in means, for I had reserved from my collections in St. Louis sufficient to meet all contingencies; and a little persuasion, which I soon received from an unexpected source, settled the matter, and entirely changed the career which my father, if not Providence, had marked out for me.

The state-rooms, so termed, of the Western steamers, are small apartments, entered from a long, general hall, or saloon, and contain two berths; so that, when the boat is full, each traveller has one room-mate at least —who may be a personal friend or acquaintance—or, if travelling without company, an entire stranger. As I was travelling alone, the individual allotted an equal right and share in my sleeping apartment, was a person I had not seen at the time of writing the letter to my father; but on entering my state-room an hour subsequent to that important event, I found a pale, delicate-looking young man seated on the lower berth, with a recently published map of the territories spread out across his knees, and over which his dark, bright eye was languidly wandering. On perceiving me, he slowly raised his head, made a slight salutation, and commenced refolding the map.

"Pardon me," said I; "but as I am about half-resolved to travel over a portion of the country which you have mapped out before you, I should like to glance at the land-marks there laid down."

"It is very imperfect, sir, I am told," he replied, as he handed me the map; "but it is the best I could

procure. To what part of the territories, if I may make so bold, are you bound?"

"I have not positively decided on going beyond the settlements," I answered; "but I have a strong inclination to venture across the prairies to Bent's Fort, merely for change of scene, and to gratify my curiosity concerning a part of the world which has long held a prominent place in the picture gallery of my mind."

"Have you selected your companions for the journey?" he inquired, with some interest.

"No! on the contrary, as I said before, I am still hesitating about the propriety of going myself."

"I hope you will decide on going, and that you will allow me to accompany you," said the young man earnestly, a faint flush tinging his wan cheek.

"It is your intention, then, to cross the plains to Bent's Fort?" I inquired, with increased interest in my room-mate.

"It is my intention to spend one season among the mountains, if God sees fit to preserve me that long," was the solemn reply; and, as he spoke, he coughed two or three times, in that short, dry, hacking manner peculiar to persons afflicted with pulmonary disease.

"You are in bad health, I perceive."

"Yes," he sighed; "and I have set out on a perilous journey, for the purpose of prolonging my life. I have been told that consumptive patients, after having been given over by physicians as incurable, have been restored to health by a year's sojourn in

the pure, bracing airs of the Rocky Mountains: I am about to make the trial—but what the result will be God only knows! I trust it will be favorable—for much do I now desire to live; but if otherwise, I must say, 'God's will be done!' even though my bones bleach in the wilderness, afar from the quiet churchyard where they should repose."

"And have you actually set out alone on this long journey?" I inquired.

"Yes, I am alone; and that is why I so earnestly desire the company of one in whom I can confide. You, sir, are a stranger to me; and yet I seem to know you as one who has a noble and sympathetic heart—as one whose spirit answers to the yearnings of mine for a true companion. This suddenly formed opinion may seem strange to you; and I am unable to give a satisfactory reason for it myself—for my natural disposition is to be reserved, except toward those I have tried and most highly esteem. I see I have excited your curiosity to know something more of one, in whom, as every expression of your countenance betrays, you already take more than a passing interest. Sit down—I will tell you in brief something of my history—for I feel it is important that we know more of each other.

"My name is Alfred Varney. I am twenty-four years of age, and was born in a midland county of the State of Tennessee. My father was a planter of some note—for several years a member of the Legislature—but died when I was quite young. An expen-

sive lawsuit, the particulars of which I need not relate, subsequently absorbed all the property he left behind him; and my mother and myself, her only child, would have been left in destitute circumstances, had not a wealthy relative generously stepped forward, and, partly by persuasion and partly by force, put her again in possession of a competency. I was sent to college, and graduated, in my twenty-first year, full of honors; but it may be those honors will cost me my life; for hard study seems to have planted the seeds of disease in a constitution never remarkably strong.

"My collegiate course finished, I went to reside with my mother, and remained with her till her death, which took place something more than a year ago. Grief for her loss prostrated me for several months; and when at last I began to recover from the first heart-rending pang, I found myself attacked with a cough, which my family physician informed me proceeded from a serious affection of the lungs. He ordered me to travel, and I was nothing loath to take his advice—for there was no longer any tie to bind me to the place of my nativity, and I felt the need of change of scene to relieve the mind if not the body. I repaired to New Orleans, and thence set sail for Havana, where I spent the winter. But I grew worse instead of better; and believing my time of departure from this world to be near at hand, I decided upon returning to the land of my birth, that my bones might rest in the quiet churchyard, beside

those of my honored father and dearly beloved mother.

"On leaving Havana, I had no desire but to reach home and die. The world looked gloomy to me—I had firm faith in a better beyond—and my soul yearned for that eternal reunion with those I loved, for which all good Christians hope and pray. How trivial an incident—trivial perhaps to all save those whom it affects as a Providence, or a destiny—may change the whole current of our feelings, causing the hopes and desires that were setting strongly onward toward eternity, to flow backward upon time, like the waters of a rushing stream when suddenly obstructed. On the passage to New Orleans, I one day chanced to perceive a very beautiful young lady, standing on the poop, near the taffrail, with a glass in her hand, through which she appeared to be scanning some distant object. There was a heavy sea, and the vessel was rolling and pitching in a manner that should have warned her that her position was one of peril. Yet, careless of her footing, she stood, absorbed in her view, heedless of danger. Life, though of little account to me, was doubtless of much to her; and impulsively I moved toward her, for the purpose of giving her a timely caution. I had scarcely taken three steps, when a sudden lurch of the vessel prostrated me, and at the same moment a shriek of despair pierced my very soul. I looked up, and to my horror perceived that the young lady had disappeared. I was a good swimmer, my life I did not value, and I

hastened to her assistance. The cry of 'A lady overboard!' had scarcely resounded, when I leaped over the taffrail into the crested waves, and reached the object of my solicitude just as she was disappearing. It was a hard struggle to keep her and myself above water till a boat came to our assistance—but I succeeded in my effort, and she was saved.

"She proved to be the daughter, and only surviving child, of an immensely wealthy Louisiana sugar-planter; and when she was placed in the arms of her nearly distracted father, I thought he would go mad with joy. His gratitude for the service I had rendered knew no bounds. He hugged me in his arms till I gasped for breath, shook my hands till I feared he would dislocate the bones, and then informed me that an ample fortune was at my disposal. I replied that I was already more than repaid for the little I had done, and that, having means wherewith to live comfortably the brief period allotted me, a fortune could add nothing to my happiness. The state of my health excited his deepest sympathy; and after some inquiries into my history, he said I must go home with him, and he would consult some of the best physicians in the country in regard to my case. I would have declined his invitation, but he would take no refusal; and so I consented, on condition that, if I died on his premises, he would have my remains interred beside those of my ancestors.

"The day following, I was introduced to his daughter as the preserver of her life. She took my

hand, and in a tremulous voice, with tearful eyes, thanked me from her heart; and added, looking upward, with the rapt, holy and touching expression of the Madonna:

"'May God reward you, when you stand in His glorious presence!'

"As this holy invocation passed her lips, I felt a strange thrill pervade my whole being—a sensation as of something unearthly communing with my spirit, and saying:

"'Live, Alfred, for her—for she was born for thee!'

"This might have been fancy, a freak of the senses, and it might have been something more—I do not know. I was excited, but weak in body; and how much involuntary power the mind in such a case may possess, it is not for me to say. It came as a reality, palpable to the senses, was felt through the innermost recesses of my soul, and left on me an impression of something superhuman. I am not naturally superstitious; but I believe the spirit exists after the death of the body; and it is reasonable to suppose it may, through some law not generally understood, make itself manifest to the spirit still in its earthly tabernacle. That it has done so, we have the solemn affirmation of the righteous ones of old, and the testimony of thousands who have lived since. But I am wearying you, and I promised to be brief."

"No! no! go on—I am deeply interested," said I.

"I wish," continued Varney, "I could picture to

you the appearance of the beautiful being who stood before me, as she thus invoked my eternal happiness! But I cannot. Words are inadequate to the portrayal, and I am wanting in that power of words which limns to the imagination as the artist to the sight. Call up your ideal of something holy and beautiful, transfused with inspired devotion, and let that suffice. From that moment I date my acquaintance with the lovely being I had saved from a watery grave; from that moment I date a friendship eternal through its purity; from that moment I date the knowledge of a love which sees a universe of happiness with the object which inspired it, and which, from its very nature, must be as undying and enduring as the Great Source of all good. From that moment I no longer desired death; but ever since a silent and incessant prayer has gone up for life—for life in the mortal state—for life in a world I was longing to bid farewell.

"Let me hasten to a conclusion. I have not spoken so much for days, and already I feel the debilitating effects of over-exertion. The gnawing of the worm at the seat of life warns me to cease—for every word seems to feed the foe I dread. I accompanied General Edwards and his lovely daughter to their splendid home, and remained their guest for several weeks. Everything was done for me that humanity could suggest; and though at first my health seemed to improve, I soon discovered it was only one of the illusions of a disease that flatters with hope while grim death stands by and strengthens his relentless grasp.

A slight cold at length prostrated me, and my attending physician gave it as his opinion that I could not long survive in a southern latitude.

"'Is there no hope for me, Doctor?' I one day inquired, in a despairing tone—for while the lovely Mary Edwards lived, the very thought of death made me shudder.

"'There is a last resort,' he answered, 'which I have heard of as being efficacious in cases similar to yours; but I only speak from hearsay, and must admit that I think the remedy as fearful as the disease.'

"'Name it, Doctor?' said I, eagerly.

"'A year's residence among the Rocky Mountains.'

"A ray of hope broke in upon me, and my resolution was instantly taken.

"'I will make the trial,' was my reply; 'for it can be but death at last.'

"I mentioned my design of speedily setting out for the Far West, to General Edwards, and he tried to dissuade me from making the rash attempt.

"'You may die on the journey,' he said, with feeling, 'and have not a single friend by to speak a consoling word.'

"'Then know,' I rejoined, 'my last prayer shall be for you and yours, and that shall be my consolation on the verge of eternity.'

"In a few days I bade my new friends a solemn adieu, as one who might never look upon them again in mortal life. Mary wept freely, her father was deeply affected, and I tore myself away with an aching

heart. The general sent me in his carriage to the river landing, some ten miles distant from his plantation; but ere I reached my first destination, a mounted negro overtook me, and placed in my hands a sealed note. I knew the writing, and eagerly tore it open. It read:

"'I shall never cease to remember and pray for the preserver of my life. God bless, preserve and restore you. Shall I ever hear from you again?

'MARY.'

"There was the trace of a single tear on the page, and I felt that every word came from her gentle heart."

Here the narrator paused, apparently exhausted by his effort in speaking, and evercome by mingled emotions of pleasure and pain. Recovering himself, he added, in a feeble tone:

"My story is ended. You see me thus far on a journey that may be my last. Why have I made you, a stranger, my confidant? I have spoken from an impulse almost foreign to my nature, and I am surprised at myself."

"Your confidence, Mr. Varney, has made me your friend," said I, taking his thin, transparent hand in mine, and giving it a gentle pressure. "You shall now hear my story, and then I will take counsel of you as to whether I shall return to my native city, or extend my journey, as your companion, to the rocky steeps of the great wilderness."

In as few words as I could, I now made him ac-

quainted with my early history, the hopes and expectations of my father, my own desires, how I came to leave home, my subsequent anxieties—in short, all I have laid before the reader.

"And now," I said, in conclusion, "what do you advise me to do?"

"My friend," he said, "as much as I desire your companionship, I would not advise you to do what you think is wrong. If you go, you will disappoint your father; if you return, you will make yourself unhappy with regrets. The only moral point which I perceive is, whether it is right to gratify your father or yourself—for whichever is done, will be at the expense of the other. It seems you have faithfully served your father the term allotted him by law and custom, and it is certainly your right, as a responsible man, to dispose of the remainder of your time as you think best. It is therefore not a question of obligation, but of affection and inclination; and as they draw different ways, I would rather you should decide for yourself. One thing I may venture to add—I do not think your father would have carried out the wishes of *his* father, had they been repugnant to his own."

I read him the letter I had just written, and asked his opinion of that.

"You have certainly made out a very strong case for yourself," he replied; "the arguments preponderate in your favor."

"Are they substantial and just?" I inquired.

"They appear so to my view."

"Then," said I, grasping his hand, "the matter is settled. I will go with you."

His hollow cheek flushed, and his bright eye glistened, as he rejoined:

"Thank God! I am no longer alone, and have a friend in my companion!"

CHAPTER IV.

PREPARATIONS FOR OUR JOURNEY.

Having arrived at a final decision, my mind once more became tranquil. I took an early opportunity to post my letter, and then busied myself in making calculations and arrangements for my long journey. My new friend and I kept together the remainder of the day, and talked over our plans, hopes, and anticipations, till a late hour of the night. However much he might have been improved in spirits by my company, he was certainly not benefitted in body by the fresh excitement and the unusual task upon his conversational powers. On retiring to rest, his cough became very troublesome; and the next morning I found him quite feverish and unrefreshed—so much so, that I insisted upon his remaining in his berth till noon.

"I fear, my dear friend," he said, in a dejected, melancholy tone, "I have set out too late."

He certainly did not look as if he could bear the fatigue and excitement of a long, hard and perilous journey beyond the comforts of civilization—exposed to all the change of atmosphere and climate, heat and cold, a scorching sun, damping dews, and drenching rains—to say nothing of a thousand other inconveniences, privations, and troubles, which often break down the hardiest constitutions; but I spoke encouragingly, and cheered him as much as lay in my power.

In person, Alfred Varney was of medium height, slender, and gracefully formed. In health, his limbs had been plump and round—the bones being small, with very little display of muscle. His complexion would have been termed dark—for such was the color of his hair and eyes—but his skin had always been remarkably clear and white; and now, under the effects of his disease, it had a pearly hue, with a kind of alabaster transparency. His face was oval, with fine, regular features, which only required the freshness and plumpness of health to render them extremely handsome; and even sunken and wasted as they were, there was still a fascination in their bright intellectuality—for the soul seemed to permeate the whole countenance with its light, as the rays of the sun do a gossamer cloud. His dark hair slightly curled above a broad, high, white forehead; he had a full, clear, expressive, pleasant, and winning eye, and a mouth and chin of decided character—the former containing two rows of white, even teeth, and the latter

being almost beardless, and cleanly shaved. As I contemplated his now emaciated form, going rapidly downward, with scarcely a ray of hope to strengthen his spirit against his disease, and pictured to myself the happiness which lay before him, could he only regain the health which had once been his, I turned away with a saddened heart, and silently and secretly prayed for his recovery.

Descending to the lower deck, I found the old trapper seated on a coil of rope, near the bow, quietly smoking his pipe, and listlessly watching the blue vapor, as it slowly curled and lazily ascended in the clear morning air.

"Well," said I, "I find you enjoying yourself this fine morning."

"Augh!" he grunted; "d'ye call this hyer fun, snagging it up the Missouri, on this —— old grunting boat? Chaw me up for a liar, ef I wouldn't raythe be picketed to a rattlesnake's den. Yes, sir-ee! Augh! wagh! shagh! Wall, hoss, how goes it? Got over your drunk, hey?"

"The very words which might, with more propriety, be addressed to you," said I.

"Expect."

"When I left you yesterday, the pint appeared to be your master."

"I looked drunk to you, hey?"

"You certainly did."

"Wall, you did to old One-Eyed—so we're quits thar. Augh!"

"But as *both* are sober now," returned I, laughing, "suppose we talk rationally."

"Blaze away."

"You intend to cross the prairies to Bent's Fort?"

"Beyond, boy."

"You will take the fort in your route?"

"Expect."

"You said something yesterday about permitting me to accompany you as far as there."

"Raythor."

"You are still of the same mind?"

"You kin gamble on to it."

"Do you expect to travel fast?"

"Some'at."

"Do you intend to join any large party?"

"Nary once."

"You have one companion, I think you said?"

"Me and Jake Stericks—Wolfy Jake I calls him—hitches teams."

"But the route I have heard spoken of as one of great peril, passing as it does through the summer hunting-grounds of some of the most savage of the predatory Indian tribes."

"Every nigger takes his chance. Augh!"

"But is there not more safety in a large party?"

"Feared of your ha'r, younker?"

"I certainly have no desire to have it grace an Indian lodge."

"Them as is born to be hanged, needn't be skeered to Injins."

"But not having a positive assurance of being destined to that elevated position myself, I do not think your sagacious remark will relieve me of any anxiety. It is possible, however, the idea may have sustained you through your perilous adventures—for you appear to have entered into your fights with a very strong presentiment of coming out of them alive, which you have certainly done."

For the first time, I perceived the muscles of the old trapper's face relax into a broad grin; and extending his hard hand, he gave me a grip like a vice, and rejoined:

"Chaw me up fur a liar, younker, but you is some'at to punks; and when you slid the covert, the old man, your dad, lost a beaver. Them's old Sam Botter's sentiments, and he's a nigger as has seed snakes afore now. Augh!"

"Well," I rejoined, "I am happy to find I stand well in your good opinion at last; and now I have a proposition to make, which is one of business."

"Let her slide, younker. Stop a minute! What's your handle?"

"My name?"

"Augh!"

"Roland Rivers."

"Rolling Rivers, hey? Chaw me, but that's queer. I once knowed a feller called Brooks, and he was jest the driest human I ever seed. Me and him got off on a perrarie together, and water wasn't nowhar. Arter our throats got swelled so as we felt thar was a sand-bar

inside, I says to him, says I, 'Brooks, you're the dryest stream ever this hyer old nigger seed. Ef you was what you're called, hyer's a beaver as would take a dive.' Good meat was Brooks—but he got rubbed out to the Blackfoot and lost his ha'r. No relation of yourn, expect?"

"I think not," returned I, with a laugh.

"Wall, younker, you're not bad named, fur you kin wet, as this hoss knows. Augh!"

"Now then to business," said I. "Since I saw you yesterday, I have met with a young man, who is afflicted with a disease, supposed to be consumption of the lungs, and who is on his way to the Rocky Mountains for the recovery of his health. I have determined to be his companion as far as Bent's Fort at least, but I do not think he will be able to travel fast. Now I wish to know if we can make any arrangement with you and your partner, so that you will time your progress to what he can perform without too much exertion? for which, of course, we are willing to give you reasonable remuneration."

"Reasonable what?"

"Remuneration. In other words, pay you a reasonable price in money;"

"Don't know, Freshwater, how that mought be. Hev to ax Wolfy Jake, afore this child kin decide on to that."

"Well, what do you think?"

"Can't say how it mought come across his scent. He's powerful to growling, is Jake, and that's why I

calls him wolfy, and we're behind time more'n a month. Ought to been on the mountains long afore this hyer —for ef beavers aint spyling to lose their ha'r to us, why was perraries made? Augh."

"Under the circumstances then," said I, "since you are unable to decide, I think I had better speak to the other mountaineers here, and see if we can make any arrangement for travelling with them."

"Freshwater, don't!" replied One-Eyed Sam, emphatically. "Boy, I've kind o' tuk to you—slash my old carcass ef I haint—and you kin gamble high on my fotching Wolfy Jake plum centre."

"Now you are talking to the point, sir, and I am glad to find you take any interest in me whatever. When I first addressed you yesterday, your actions seemed to imply that my company was not particularly agreeable."

"You're right, younker, it wasn't. I haint much liking fur strangers, no how; and when I sees a feller rigged out in sich —— silky, black, preacher toggery as you've got on, I ginerally puts him down as sp'ilt meat—jest fit for turkey buzzards, and them things. But you broke in decent, and kind o' tuk me afore I knowed it; and ef I didn't keep letting on, it was bekase I didn't like to own up beat the fust jerk."

"Well, shall I consider it settled, that my friend and I are to journey with you on the conditions proposed? You seemed just now to think your partner might make positive objections."

"He'll hev to gin in, Wolfy will, or else thar'll be powder burnt."

"I should not like to be the cause of any disagreement between you."

"Wall, he'll growl a few—that's his natur—he al'ays does that thar, anyhow; but hyer's a nigger as has some b'ar into him; and when old Sam plants his hoof, it's thar. You and your friend jest git off to Independence, and leave the rest to this child."

"But there must be a good understanding with all parties before we set out together."

"Freshwater, you kin take this hyer coon's davy (affidavit) thar won't be nothing shorter—nary once—chaw me. Augh!"

"Very well—then we will leave the boat at Independence-landing."

"You'll want a hoss apiece, and another rig for the plains."

"Certainly—but I suppose we can procure all we may need at Independence?"

"Expect."

"Then I may consider the matter as settled?"

"Raythe r."

"What will you drink?"

"*Only* half a pint," he replied, with a sly wink. "When this hyer beaver got up to-day, he says, says he, 'Sam, you old sinner, it don't do to indulge.' 'Nary once,' says Sam; 'but while you're in this —— climate, you'd better season nor spile.' 'Right,' says this beaver, 'and half a pint is enough fur seasoning.'

So we agreed on to that thar; and chaw me up fur a liar, ef we're going to drink nary drop more to once. Augh!"

"A very reasonable resolution," said I, not a little amused at the old trapper's singular notions of temperance; and on reaching the saloon, I dispatched him the stipulated half pint by one of the waiters.

My friend, as I now felt I had a right to term Alfred Varney, succeeded in getting a good sleep during the morning, and arose about noon, much refreshed in body and improved in spirits. I immediately informed him of the partial arrangement I had made with the trapper, which met with his approval. In fact this very matter had been talked over between us the night before, and we had decided either to join some small party, who might for a reasonable consideration be induced to time their journey to our convenience, or else employ a guide, and set off, in colloquial phrase, "on our own hook." True, we knew the journey under consideration to be one of great peril; but we knew it to be perilous for both large and small parties—the former, of course, being better able to withstand an attack of some roaming band of savages—but the latter, from its smallness, being less liable to attract the notice and excite the cupidity of hostile neighbors; so that, on the whole, the chances of getting safely through, might be set down as about equal. Besides, as my friend said, the object of his journey was the prolongation of his life; and it would be worse than folly

to run the risk of losing it, by overtasking himself on the way, as he might be compelled to do, were he to travel with a large company, all anxious to reach their destination in the shortest possible time.

In the course of the day, I introduced Varney to One-Eyed Sam; who observed that "he was a powerful thin beaver, and it would take a heap of meat to make him fat enough to butcher"—the pleasantry and oddity of the remark causing my friend to laugh outright. We held a conversation concerning the outfit we would require, the probable outlay, and agreed upon the amount we should pay the trapper for escorting us safely to Bent's Fort—the latter item being neither more nor less than one hundred dollars—or fifty dollars apiece—for I insisted, much against the wish of my friend, on being permitted to bear one-half of the whole expense, the extra charge for delay on his account included.

Having now done all we could in the way of arranging our land journey, we waited, with some impatience, the slow progress of the boat up the muddy and snag-bottomed channel of the Missouri. The river being high, and the current strong, with immense rafts of drift-wood floating down, rendered the navigation of the stream tedious and perilous; but though we met with some troublesome delays, no serious accident occurred; and on the afternoon of the fourth day, we disembarked at Independence-landing, as much elated as ever were two school boys at an unexpected holiday. That night we lodged at a comfortable inn, in

the very heart of a great western rendezvous, on the very borders of civilized and savage life, surrounded by a motley collection of people from all parts of the world, consisting of emigrants, travellers, hunters, trappers, traders, *coureurs des bois*, Indians, half-breeds, and negroes. The novelty of our situation tended to excite my companion and myself; and in talking over our plans and hopes for the eventful future, we consumed many hours that should have been devoted to sleep.

The trapper left us at the village, to go in quest of his friend, who was supposed to be encamped, with his animals, somewhere in the vicinity—for he disliked the settlements so much, that he could not be prevailed upon to remain in one a moment longer than was absolutely necessary for the transaction of his business, whatever that might be.

On the following morning Botter returned, and reported having found his friend encamped on a small creek, about five or six miles distant, and nearly on the line of our route; and that having laid before him the matter which most concerned us, and done some "pretty tall swearing," he had carried his point, and they had finally parted like two kittens, to meet again on the following day and commence their journey across the plains.

"So now you see, Freshwater, that you and your friend Shadbones—(excuse me! but this hyer old nigger al'ays has to put a handle to suit hisself)—you and your friend Shadbones, I say, has got desperate

little time to buy up all you want for the tramp, and you'd better stir your stumps and go in."

"And will you only give us twenty-four hours to prepare for our long journey?" I inquired, in some surprise.

"Aint that thar enough? Chaw me, but I could buy the whole —— settlement in three hours, ef I only had the tin."

"Why, just now you seemed to think the time very short yourself."

"Yes, for you city chaps, who al'ays make a —— rumpus about nothing."

"Then suppose, in consideration of our ignorance and greenness, you give us three days instead of one?"

"Can't do it, Freshwater."

"Then will you assist us in our purchases?"

"Expect."

"Very well, then we will set about them at once."

I need not enter into details concerning that day's work—for work it was, and of the most fatiguing kind—at least I thought so at the time; for in order to spare my friend, I took upon myself all the labor and responsibility of purchasing two riding horses, and one pack-mule, together with saddles, bridles, water-proof packs, rifles, pistols, knives, ammunition, a portable tent, blankets, costumes, and many other articles too tedious to mention. Then we had to overhaul our baggage, to select what we considered indispensable, and stow away all the clothing to be

left behind, so as to guard against moths—all of which we finally consigned to the care of our landlord, trusting to his honesty by virtue of necessity. Then our new mountain-costumes had to be put on, our packs packed, our bridles and saddles fitted to our animals; and, what with one thing and another, it was twelve o'clock at night before I was ready to lie down, and take my last sleep, for a long time to come, upon what, by way of distinction, I will term a civilized bed.

I had just fallen into a comfortable doze, and was dreaming of home, when I was suddenly awakened by a rough shake, and the harsh voice of One-Eyed Sam sounded most unpleasantly in my ear.

"Come, Freshwater, out of this hyer feathered nest!" he said; "out on't, I say, and git ready to tramp! Daylight's about, and the owls is gone to roost, and this hyer old nigger wants to break for better quarters. Augh!"

"Look you, Mr. Botter," returned I, not in the best humor imaginable—for I could see no reason in such haste, and I had not been used to having my sleep disturbed, especially in so rough a manner: "Look you, sir! if my memory serves me rightly, we pay you a round sum to travel with us to suit our convenience, and this is certainly not the way I had expected you to begin the performance of our contract. I fatigued myself yesterday to please you, and now I am going to sleep a few hours to please myself."

"Wall, you kin do as you like!" growled the old

trapper; "but chaw me up for a liar, ef this hyer nigger stays in this ——— settlement another hour! Augh! wagh! shagh!"

"We had better humor him, and make an early start," said Varney to me in an under tone as One-Eyed Sam was leaving the room.

"Are you able and willing to set out now, my friend?" I inquired.

"Yes, I feel quite strong."

"Very well, then, for your sake I will not be obstinate. Mr. Botter," I called, "if you will see to having the animals got ready, we will set off as soon as you like."

We hastily arose, donned our new costumes, collected our weapons, roused the landlord, and paid our reckoning; by which time the horses and mule were at the door, and ready for the journey. Ere the sun rose, we were in our saddles, and were following close in the wake of the old trapper, who, with the vigor and activity of youth, was leaving the town, due west, by long and rapid strides. We soon crossed a little stream, and ascended a grass-covered knoll; when, turning in our saddles, we looked back on the town, by the dim morning light, and silently bade farewell to the last civilized settlement we were destined to behold, till many a day of peril and suffering, privation and sorrow, had placed its sad record on the tablets of our memories.

CHAPTER V.

BORDER INCIDENTS.

It was the latter part of May, and the morning was bright and beautiful. The atmosphere was clear, the air serene, and not a cloud was visible in the broad, blue sky, that dome-like rose above us. In the east the seven hues blended in perfect beauty, and gradually grew more and more brilliant, till the god of day himself appeared, surrounded by a halo of glory.

The scene that opened before us was an undulating surface, carpeted with bright green grass, and flowers of gorgeous beauty, and shaded here and there with delightful groves, among whose branches fluttered and twittered and sung ten thousand warblers. Bright dew-drops rested on leaf and blade and flower; and as the sunlight fell upon them, they glistened and sparkled like so many diamonds. The view in all directions was refreshing—was delightfully invigorating; and had my mind been wholly at ease, I should undoubtedly have experienced an exhilaration akin to rapture. But with the sensations of pleasure came sensations of pain. I was leaving home, leaving civilization, for an indefinite period. My bark was now fairly adrift upon the ocean of adventure, bound on a voyage of discovery, and might never anchor again in a peaceful and quiet haven. I had taken leave

of all who loved me; had parted from all I loved; and this as it were by stealth—in a clandestine manner—in a manner to make my conscience in some degree my accuser. Rivet my eyes upon whatsoever object of interest, turn my thoughts upon whatsoever subject of contemplation, I could not shut out the images of those who had given me being and reared me so fondly, nor cease to remember my transgression of the sacred law of filial affection. I had not done right in leaving my parents for this perilous journey, without an explicit and mutual understanding; I had been wanting in moral courage; I had left them in a cowardly manner; and no reasoning to the contrary could be other than sophistry. I felt this—felt it deep in my soul; it was an internal conviction that no external argument could eradicate; and it depressed my spirits, and made me unhappy. The more bright and joyous the scenes around me, the more sensibly I felt the contrast of a heart made gloomy and sad by the remembrance of what my conscience could not approve. But the die was cast, my destiny was sealed, and it was not a time for repentance now.

"How beautiful! how glorious! how enchanting!" exclaimed my companion, as we rode slowly along through green, dewy grass, and bright, sweet-scented flowers; and as he spoke, his dark eye sparkled, and his wan features flushed with animation. "See! Roland—see that tiny stream of silver, winding around between emerald banks, and playing hide and seek through yonder groves, where a thousand gay

birds are singing as they might have sung in Paradise! Surely, this must be the Garden of Eden; and this morning's ride will well repay me for days of pain and gloom. Oh! why should I want to die, when God's earth is so beautiful?"

"I am glad the sight reanimates you," I replied; "and it is my earnest prayer, that you may be spared to behold it in years to come. It is certainly the most charming scene I ever beheld, and I must regard it as an auspicious beginning of our journey."

"And yet you seem sad, Roland!" he rejoined, with feeling.

"My mind goes home in spite of me, Alfred. I am forced to reflect that, whatever pleasures may surround me, I have done that which will cause the hearts of my fond parents to beat with sorrow."

"Can I rest assured that I did not influence your decision with regard to this journey?" inquired Varney, with some anxiety.

"You may rest assured that, if that decision be wrong, not the faintest shadow of blame can attach to you. To say you had no influence upon my decision, would be to assert that I took no interest in you or your fate, which would not be true; but my own mind reasoned, weighed, and resolved."

"Thank Heaven! your words give me relief!" said Varney. "But, Roland, if you regret your resolve, it is not too late to retrieve it. If you have any compunctions of conscience, I pray you turn back, and consider me in the matter not at all!"

"No!" said I, firmly; "I shall go forward, be the consequences what they may."

Steadily the old trapper pursued his course, taking long and rapid strides, turning neither to the right nor left, and apparently heeding nothing around him: I say apparently, for it was not so in reality—the truth being that nothing escaped his eagle glance. About two miles west of Independence, we passed a pleasant grove, where a large party of emigrants and adventurers had encamped the night before, only one of whom was now to be seen. He was a tall, raw-boned, green-looking specimen of a country rustic, and was mounted on a slab-sided skeleton of a beast, which, by dint of kicks and curses, he urged up to us on a trip-hammer trot.

"I say, whoa, you scamp, you!" he sung out to his shadowy animal, as he came up along side of me, at the same time giving the cord rein a violent, sudden jerk, which brought the horse's nose to a nearly perpendicular position, while his legs seemed to keep wilfully moving forward. "I say, you fellers, you haint seen no stray mules nor nothing along your way, I calculate, have you?"

"Nary mule, stranger," replied the trapper, suddenly wheeling about, and slyly tipping me a wink; "but I seed a stray jackass."

"Where, neow?" inquired our peaked-faced friend, with a nasal whine, that said "wooden nutmegs" as distinctly as ever a clock said "tick." "Whoa! you consarned old beast, you!" jerking the rope-bridle, as

his half-starved animal made a sudden lurch forward for a tempting bunch of green grass. "I guess I'll larn ye, you derned old gormandizer, you! Didn't you have enough last night tew last you a month—say, neow?"

"I should not suppose, from the condition of your horse, he would ever want to eat again," said I, turning away to conceal a laugh.

"That's a fact, I sweow; but, dern him! he's jest like Phar'oh's lean kind—he don't want to dew nothing else but eat. Wal, Mister, where'd you see that are jackass?"

"Straddle a pile of hoss-bones. Augh!"

"Dew tell!" was the innocent reply of our Yankee friend. "Calculate he was dead?"

"Nary once, greeny—wagh! hagh! wagh!" roared One-Eyed Sam, which was the first time I had ever heard him laugh boisterously.

"Say, you, Mister, (addressing me,) what's the matter with that are feller? So'thing up here, I guess!" tapping his head.

"Yes," said I, "you can see he has been injured;" and I drew my finger across the base of my forehead, to indicate the long white scar of the trapper.

"Wal," pursued the Yankee, "about them are mules, consarn 'em! You see my name's Pease!"

"Green in the pod, chaw me!" interrupted Botter, with another roar.

Mr. Pease looked very sharply, very savagely at the trapper, and rejoined:

"I know a thing or two about taming you fellers. You've been hurt in the upper story; but a sharp eye'll fetch you down, if you don't look eout. Yes, (turning to me,) look him sharp in the eye—that's the way to make a lunatic haul in. Wal, as I's saying, my name's Pease, and I'm all the way from the State of Connecticut, going over tew Oregon, to look eout some prime land. There's a big party on us, and we camped down there last night, and I've lost two mules, which I want to find the wo'st kind. The other fellers have gone on and left me to dew it alone; and I've looked all areound, without seeing a derned thing of 'em. What'll I dew neow?"

"Hyer's a nigger as will tell you what you'd better do, afore you spile," put in One-Eyed Sam, advancing to the side of the forlorn traveller. "Ef you ever expect to see your friends agin, you'd better put some salt on to your top-knot, and start old bones arter 'em. Augh!"

The Yankee looked savagely at the speaker, and then inquiringly at me.

"I think the advice is good," I said. "I am afraid you will not find your mules; and the longer you remain behind your friends, the more difficulty you will have in overtaking them, especially with your horse in his present condition."

"Consarn it, what'll I dew?" whined Mr. Pease of Connecticut. "Them are derned mules carried all my duds. I got a feller to let me put 'em in his wagon, till I found 'em; but he'll make me pay like

thunder, if they has to go all the way in his team. But I guess I'll have to gin 'em up. I don't see nothing on 'em nowhere. Much obleeged to you, Mister. Whoa! hold up your consarned old head, will you? You'll have to dew so'thing besides eat, you old fool! Wal, good-bye; and now, go 'lang!" and with a few jerks at his rope-bridle, and sundry kicks on the ribs of his skeleton beast, Mr. Pease set off in the direction taken by his travelling companions, and, riding through the before-mentioned grove, was soon lost to our view.

This incident created a fund of merriment, and proved highly beneficial to me, by diverting my thoughts from more serious matters.

Thus far we had kept upon the regular western trail; but we now turned off in a southerly direction; and after travelling an hour longer, over a fine, beautiful country, partly open, and partly timbered, with bright, green grass and gay flowers all around us, we came suddenly upon the camp of Jake Stericks. It was in a little valley, hidden from our view until we had ascended the hill which overlooked it. A clear little stream purled through the valley, margined by green "tall grass"—so called, by way of distinguishing it from the short "buffalo grass" of the plains or prairies—while a grove of trees, consisting for the most part of hickory, walnut, ash and cottonwood, threw over it a delightful shade. Four mules and two horses, hoppled and tethered, were quietly cropping the green herbage, within pistol shot of the

trapper, who was squatted upon the ground, beside his "kit," lazily smoking his pipe.

On perceiving us, Stericks slowly gathered himself upon his feet, and giving himself a shake, like a water spaniel, awaited our approach in a kind of dogged silence. He was a short, square-built man, about forty years of age, with a broad, bronzed, phlegmatic-looking face, light brown, curly hair, and a small, cold blue eye. As we drew up along side of him, he fixed his eye upon the animals, which he scanned like a connoisseur, but appeared to take no notice of the riders.

"Hyer we is, Wolfy!" said Botter, dismounting. "Got arything to feed?"

Wolfy Jake pointed to a quarter of a deer, suspended to the limb of a tree, and then to the sun.

"I knowed it," he grumbled; "never will git off. Why didn't you git your feed whar you did your work?"

"Ef you knowed it, old growler, whar's your fire?" inquired One-Eyed Sam, as, whipping out his knife, he cut down the meat, and proceeded to divide it into slices for toasting. "Yes, you knowed it," he continued; "and not a —— spark to swa'r by. Whar's your kindlings?"

Stericks pointed to a handful of dry twigs and leaves, which he had collected; and while Botter struck fire with flint and steel, he set to work to harness, pack, and prepare the animals for the journey.

"Come!" said the old trapper to us, as, having dis-

mounted, we stood watching his proceedings, with the interest which anything novel generally excites; "ef you want your feed, you'd best go in;" and having by this time started a fire, he thrust a sharp stick into a large slice of meat, and held it to the blaze. "A-u-g-h!" he resumed, with a long drawn grunt of satisfaction, as, having scorched the meat outside and heated it through, he tore out a large mouthful with fingers and teeth; "this hyer's living agin, chaw me! Come, Freshwater, jest you and Shadbones go in—fur this hyer nigger 'd like to make a long tramp, to please that thar Wolfy, and the thing's agin natur with a empty meat-trap. Augh!"

"We may as well make a beginning," said I to Varney. "The smell of the toasting meat gives me an appetite, and we can season with salt—besides, you know, we have laid in a good stock of sea-biscuits."

We accordingly set to work, and prepared our first meal beyond the settlements, which we devoured with a relish known only to those who have made the trial. I was pleased to see that Varney ate heartily; and when we had concluded our simple repast, and washed it down with clear water from the running stream, he exclaimed, somewhat enthusiastically:

"Roland, my friend, this is delightful! I seem to feel stronger already."

Meantime, Stericks had saddled the two horses, to be ridden by himself and Botter, and had packed the mules with the kit to be used by them on their journey into the wilderness, so that, all being ready for a

new start, we had only to mount and set forward. Shaping our course to the northward, we soon struck the great Santa Fe Trail, and followed it for some twenty miles, over the same rolling, delightful country, which continued to present to the view one of the most pleasing landscapes it has ever been my fortune to behold. The day was warm; but a refreshing breeze blew steadily from the west, and relieved it of anything like sultriness. My friend bore the fatigues of equestrianism, so new to both of us, much better than I had anticipated; but when the sun had passed the meridian some three hours, he signified his wish to rest for the night, in order not to overtask his feeble system. At this, Wolfy Jake, who so far had scarcely noticed us, began to grumble and complain that such foolish, childish delays would keep him from the mountains till too late to trap beaver enough to buy his tobacco.

"It is for these very delays that we have agreed to pay you a good round sum," said I, in a tone calculated to assure him I knew my rights, and did not intend to be cheated out of them, to please one who had taken no pains to render himself an agreeable companion.

"See hyer, boy," he replied, turning to me with a look of fierce contempt, "who axed you to put in your blab?"

Though taught from youth to curb my temper, and keep a rein upon my passions, I had never so mastered myself, or been so mastered, as to quietly

brook an intended insult; and as he spoke, I felt my features flush, and the hot blood leap through my veins. My first impulse was, to spring from my horse and drag him from his; but by a great effort I restrained myself, and rejoined, as quietly as I could, though it seemed to me the words fairly hissed as they came forth:

"Sir! when you address *me*, boy though I may be in your *aged* estimation, I will thank you to do so in a more respectful manner!"

"Come, come, friends—no quarrelling!" said Varney, anxiously, spurring his horse in between us. "Rather than have a quarrel, I will endeavor to ride a few miles further."

"Not a mile further!" said I. "We stipulated that this journey should be made to suit your convenience; and if our guides do not intend to adhere strictly to these conditions, we will turn back at once, and let them go on alone."

"Them's the tarms, and you knows it, Wolfy," put in One-Eyed Sam, riding up along side of his dissatisfied partner; "and so it's the advice of this hyer old beaver, that you jest shut up your meat-trap! D'ye he-ar?"

"That boy's insulted me; and I'll lick him for't, or die!" growled Stericks.

"Wolfy Jake, that thar ain't so," returned Sam. "I seed and heerd the whole on't; you insulted him; and ef you dar to put a paw on to him, hyer's a nigger as 'll let daylight through you agin, by —— !"

This threat silenced Stericks, who now relapsed into a sulky mood, and rode slowly along, evidently brooding revenge in his heart. In the course of a few minutes, the old trapper, as if without design, brought his horse along side of mine, and in a low tone, so as not to be overheard by his companion, said:

"Freshwater, I can't say you didn't do right in speaking up like a man; but I'm desperate sorry you and Wolfy has quarrelled—for he's the devil to git along with—has got a memory like a red nigger—and thar ain't another human on the borders kin shut him up 'cept me. Me and him once had a grand go in; and when we kim out, he'd got daylight clean through him, and this hyer old nigger hadn't one eye, four teeth, and jest only a chunk of a nose. This happened up to the Sweetwater Divide, long time ago; and nary human seed the fight 'cept me; for Wolfy laid out in his tracks, as dead as a skinned buffler. I dug a hole, and was gwine to cache* him, when I seed him begin to fotch sensible. This child took care on him, and fed him for two months; and when he got about, he swo rehe'd never fight sich a —— cantankerous old hoss agin, and he hain't. Augh!"

"Well," said I, "I regret that I have had occasion for hard words, on a journey which I had hoped

* A term used by the mountain men, signifying to bury or hide—from the French word "cacher."

would prove agreeable to all parties—but what would you have me do?"

"Let him growl, and don't say nothing. Growling is into his natur', jest as nateral as a bite ar' into a snapping turkle; and all you has to do, is to jest let him hev his say, and no bones broke. It's desperate hard to do it, to a lad of speret like you; but what good 'ud kim fur getting into a fight, and leaving your carcass out in these hyer diggings, jest below wolf-smell?"

"True," said I, after a moment's reflection; "what good would come of fighting a man who seems to know little else? I will take your advice, sir, and remain silent or civil, unless he encroaches too much upon good nature. But understand one thing, Mr. Botter——"

"Sam, I is—One-Eyed Sam—leastways sence I fit Wolfy Jake—and I don't know no sich beaver as *Mr.* Botter."

"Very well, then, Sam—if you prefer being so called—I want it distinctly understood, before we proceed any further, that you are to make each day's journey no longer than my friend can perform without excessive fatigue! It is in consideration of this we have agreed to pay you your own price; and if you think you and your partner cannot conform to the contract, without even so much as grumbling, why then we part here."

"That thar seems all fa'r and squar', chaw me!"

"It is as it seems, Sam."

"Wall, you drop behind, and let this hyer nigger hev a confab with Wolfy."

I made a halt, and called Varney to my side, while Botter spurred on and overtook his friend. I related to Varney what had passed between the trapper and myself, and he shuddered as he replied:

"Oh, my dear friend, how fortunate it is that you did not get into a physical contest with that dangerous fellow! You would have been killed, I feel assured; and then what would have become of poor me? Oh, for my sake, Roland, if not for your own, avoid quarrelling with men who would think no more of killing you than they would a wolf!"

"Would you have me act the coward when insulted?" I inquired, with some asperity.

"Answer me, Roland!" returned Varney; "which requires the most *true* courage—to bear a harsh, unkind, contemptuous word-insult, or to resent that word-insult with a retort, and perhaps a blow?"

"To bear in silence," said I.

"Then I would have you courageous beyond what the world terms courage."

"It is not in my nature to be so."

"We can mould our nature, in a great degree, Roland, I know by experience; and we often throw the blame of some hasty action upon our *natural* disposition and passions, when the blame should rest upon our *acquired* infirmities, through inattention to the laws of proper mental government or self-control —upon the inner man, that should govern the outer."

"I feel you are right—I know you are right—yet it is much easier to feel and know right, than to do it."

"Ay, my friend; and there comes the struggle in which every reasoning being, made in God's image, immortal as his Maker, should engage—the struggle to conquer himself."

"And would you, if attacked, not defend yourself?"

"Most assuredly, else would I not go armed; but bear in mind, there is a great difference between an insult and an attack. Self-preservation is the first law of nature, seen in the instinct of every living thing; and if attacked to the danger of life, then we have a right to protect life, even should such protection require the life of the assailant."

"And yet, after all," said I, "you come far short of what Jesus Christ taught and practiced; he justified no retort, retaliation, or resistance; but if smote on one cheek, to turn the other."

"I grant you," said Varney, with a smile; "but if my platform of self-guidance falls short of that laid down by the Great Master, how much more so yours? No man living can be wholly like Jesus Christ; but the nearer we approach him in principle, the more we purify and fit our spirits for eternal communion with the spirits of just men made perfect. But see! Botter has separated from his companion, and is awaiting us: let us ride on."

"One question more," said I, as we started our horses forward. "You heard Stericks threaten to

chastise me for my insolence: if he lay hand on me, what would you have me do?"

He looked hard at me, his eye brightened, and his thin lips compressed, as he answered:

"I am a very weak, erring mortal, I find, after all, Roland. If he touch you, without further provocation—which Heaven forbid—I cannot expect you will forget you are armed against savages and wild beasts."

"Enough, my friend—I understand you!"

On coming up to Botter, he said:

"I've gin Wolfy Jake a right smart chance of a talking to, and it's the opine of this hyer old hoss he'll keep down. D'ye see that thar clump of trees yonder?"

"Yes."

"We camp thar. Augh!"

"You have triumphed, Roland," whispered Varney; "but God send you do not have cause to regret it!"

CHAPTER VI.

OUR FIRST CAMP.

WELL do I remember our first camp beyond the borders of civilization. It is one of the pictures which still hang in the cabinet of memory. The spot selected was in a little dell, beneath a clustering grove of hickory, maple, ash, linden and sycamore, through whose interlocking branches the grape-vine wound in gay festoons, and made an arbour fit for a lady's siesta. Through this delightful retreat rippled a rivulet, its bright, clear waters rolling over a bed of white sand and pebbles that sparkled like gems. The green, luxuriant grass was variegated with flowers of many hues, and birds of gay plumage played bo-peep and sung songs amid the heavy foliage, or clove the air, like winged jewels, as they passed over the adjacent openings.

The face of the country was still the same as we had passed over during the day—a rolling prairie of high grass and flowers, alternating with ridges rocky and steep, and wood-lined streams. Our camp, which Varney christened Calyptra, was about a quarter of a mile south of the great trail, and had evidently not been visited by any of the parties passing so near. We at once unsaddled our animals, which seemed eager for the enjoyment before them, and, having

hoppled, turned them loose. Varney and I next set to work to erect our portable tent; which consisted of small strong ash poles, made to lengthen by means of iron slides, unite at the top, and fold together like an umbrella. A sharp iron spike, at the bottom of each pole, readily penetrated the earth, and made the base firm; and there were rings and short hand spikes, by which we could further secure it, with very little trouble. Over the frame, when spread, we drew a water-proof canvass, which we fastened down with hooks; and thus our house was erected, with the cost of only ten minutes' labor. Underneath this tent we placed all our baggage, and swung our hammocks to rings in the poles; so that, whatever might be the weather without, we could sleep above ground, and escape being drenched.

"There," said Varney, when we had put everything in order, "if the Indians will only be kind enough to let us alone, I think we can sleep as comfortably as twin monkeys in a menagerie."

"It's all powerful nice fur you settlement fellers," said Botter, as he inspected outside and inside, with a look of curiosity; "but I tell you what it is, hyer's a nigger as 'ud sooner hev 'arth for a bed, and heaven for a kivering, nor all sich squaw contrivances ever made. Augh!"

"Every one to his liking," said I.

"Wall, yes, expect—and that thar's what this hyer old coon telled old Joe Nesbit's darter, Sal, when she tuk to a hump-backed, squint-eyed tailor, 'stead of

me. But I say, Freshwater, how long do you 'spect that thar flimsy fixing is gwine to float out this hyer way?"

"I see no reason why we may not carry it through with us."

"Don't ye now?" said Sam. "Wall, jest you wait till one of them perrarie storms gits afoul on't, and you'll hear so'thing howl, or else thar aint no b'ars. Augh!"

"You think it wouldn't stand a storm-gust, then?"

"Some I've seed afore to-day, 'ud fotch it out like a Kaintuck dandy-nigger's dickey, you kin gamble on to that."

"Well, we must take the chances. My friend, being in delicate health, was afraid to venture sleeping on the ground—at least until inured to the climate and change of life. But where is your companion?"

"Gone fur meat. He seed a deer over yonder, and felt like chawing—fur Wolfy's one of them as is powerful on to feed."

"I feel inclined to try the sport myself," said I.

"Ever do arything to that sort?"

"Never."

"Then its like you'll hev more fun nor meat."

"You think I can't kill a deer, eh?"

"You kin try, Freshwater."

"And try I will," said I; "though I am free to acknowledge myself more familiar with a day-book than with a rifle."

"Do not go far," said Varney, with some uneasi-

ness; "for not being familiar with the country, you might get lost."

"Have no fear, my friend! I will keep the camp in view, and return by sunset, at the very latest."

"Let's see what you've got fur a shooter," said Sam; and he gave my rifle a careful inspection. Then levelling it for an aim, and holding it with an iron nerve, that had no tremor, he discharged it—adding, as he brought the breech to the ground: "Ef she's fit fur a old hunter to sw'ar by, thar's a hole plum centre in yon yaller leaf."

We hastened to the object which he had selected, at the distance of some seventy paces, and found it bored through the centre.

"An admirable shot!" exclaimed I.

"Not a bad shooting-iron," said Sam, indifferently. "With a good eye, and steady arm, she'll do herself a heap of credit; and that's more'n kin be said of every —— gim-crack like her!" alluding to the silver-plated mountings. "I say, Freshwater, what'll you gin fur a shoot to this hyer old nigger, a hundred paces off."

"I have no desire to kill you," said I. Botter burst into a horse-laugh.

"I'd jest like to gamble on to it, you can't hit nary tree to that thar distance."

"What will you bet?" inquired I, supposing him to be joking.

"Money?"

"Anything you please."

"I'll try your narves on to five dollars."

"That I can't hit a tree at a hundred paces?"

"Raythér."

"Done!" said I: "select your mark, and prepare to lose;" and hastily, and under some excitement, I proceeded to reload my rifle.

Botter pointed out a tree, and said:

"Ef you graze the bark, old One-Eyed owes you five; ef you don't"—

"Young Two-Eyed owes you ten!" rejoined I, laughing; and bringing my rifle to my shoulder, with a quick and somewhat careless aim, I fired.

"Nary once, chaw me!" rejoined Sam, fixing his one eye upon me, with a most ludicrous expression. "I knowed it—you city chaps hain't the narve you reckon you has."

I hurried to the tree, and felt deeply chagrined to find no trace of the bullet, high nor low.

"Perhaps you would like to double that bet?" said I, somewhat nervously.

"Raythér."

I went back, loaded, and fired again, with the same result.

"The piece does not carry true," said I, greatly mortified.

"Double to quits," returned Botter, with a broad grin, "that this hyer one-eyed old nigger bores a dollar with that thar same shooter."

"Done!"

I fastened a white flower, the size of a dollar, to the

tree; and One-Eyed Sam, standing at the required distance, loaded and fired with great deliberation. The flower fell. I hastened to pick it up, and, to my utter astonishment, found the ball had driven the pin through its centre.

"The de'il is in it!" said I, perplexed and crest-fallen. "I will give over hunting deer for to-day, and practice at a mark."

"Let me try my hand!" said Varney.

"Two to one agin you, Shadbones!" roared Botter, fairly holding his sides.

"That I don't hit the tree at this distance?"

"Expect."

"My horse against yours, Sam!" said Varney, flushing with excitement.

"Them's 'em—let her went!"

Varney loaded, fired, and missed the tree.

He looked perfectly blank at the result, and I enjoyed a laugh at his expense.

"If I were as superstitious as some I have known," he said, looking curiously at the old trapper, "I would be willing to swear you had bewitched this rifle. I never missed such a mark before, at such a distance, in my life."

"Thar's tricks to all trades 'cept ourn," rejoined Botter, throwing himself upon the ground, in a paroxysm of laughter.

Never had I seen the old trapper so completely convulsed with merriment: he rolled, yelled and screamed, till our horses pricked up their ears, and

snorted with fear: and no wonder—for his was a most unearthly cachinnation, something between the screech of a catamount and the bellow of a bull, alternating upon the upper and lower keys.

"He has played us some trick, you may depend!" said Varney. "I know I am not such a bad shot as to miss a tree at a hundred yards, even though I might not hit a dollar."

"But what can be his trick?" inquired I: "we loaded the rifles ourselves."

Varney again levelled the piece, ran his eye along the barrel, and exclaimed:

"I have it! I have it! he has altered the hind sight: no wonder we could not hit the tree!"

"Let that thar l'arn ye to al'ays keep your eye skinned, and look to your hind sights as well as target!—look close around your nose as well as a mile ahead!—them's the lessons we old mountain-men larn 'arly!" said Botter, gathering himself up, and wiping the tears from his one eye. "Augh!" he continued, drawing a long breath; "this hyer old nigger hain't had sich a right down good old Kaintuck yell, sence he barked around his mamma's float-sticks—chaw me!"

"And do you claim the bets for your trick?" I inquired.

"Nary once, Freshwater—I'll gin in on to them thar. Shadbones wants his hoss, I expect, and you've been decent fur a greeny; so we'll quit squar'—or ef you raythor, we'll wet on't to Bent's."

"I shall remember my first lesson," said I—and I did.

"Trust in God and keep your powder dry," was a remark, which the position of the speaker, together with its peculiarity and force, rendered immortal; and "look close around your nose, as well as a mile ahead," though homely phraseology, certainly contained good advice for one who, like myself, was venturing upon an unknown region of danger.

Having properly adjusted the hind sight of my rifle, and reloaded it, I made another trial of marksmanship; and found I not only hit the tree, but within three inches of the point at which I had aimed; and this, even the old trapper admitted, was remarkably good shooting for one having as little practice as myself.

"But fur all that thar, Freshwater," he continued, "I wouldn't be afeard to gamble high on to it, that you don't fotch nary deer; and what's more to the pi'nt, that you couldn't plug a live one to thirty yard!"

"Why so?"

"'Kase you're young, green, and hain't the narve."

"A fig for your sage opinion!" said I, with a laugh. "You might have made me believe something of this, if I had not discovered the trick you just now played me; but nothing, save repeated failure, can convince me I cannot lodge a ball in a deer as well as a tree."

"You kin try it," grinned Sam.

"And try it I will, this very day—that is, if there are any deer to be found."

"Skase, but about," returned Botter, "and it's good three hour to sundown. Now see hyer, boy! ef you fotch in ary part of a deer, that you've shot, this hyer old nigger'll back water agin all he's said about greenness, and stand a heavy wet to Bent's hisself. Augh!"

"If I don't," rejoined I, "I will give you leave to laugh and drink at my expense, and to call up as many friends as you like."

"Be careful, my friend, not to lose sight of the camp, in your eagerness to establish a reputation as a hunter!" said Varney.

"Have no fear! I will take the best of care of myself, in every particular," was my confident reply.

I then proceeded to equip myself for a hunt on foot; and in less than a quarter of an hour, I had left the camp, secretly exulting in my anticipated triumph.

I have said that the country was partly open and partly timbered—the ground rolling, with an appearance similar to large swells of the ocean. The face of the country was so much alike in every direction, that I saw one might easily lose himself, unless proper precautions were adopted; but I set off directly south, resolved not to go beyond a certain point, from which I could easily retrace my steps. I soon started some prairie-chickens from the covert of the tall grass; but as I was bent upon bringing in a deer, I did not waste any ammunition upon them. Next I came upon some animals resembling the hare; but for the same reason, I did not molest them. Deer, in this region, were

rather scarce; but after a tramp of a couple of miles, I espied a group of four in the distance; and creeping carefully along to the leeward, I soon had the satisfaction of placing a wooded knoll between them and myself, which enabled me to draw near them with less caution, and without being scented or seen.

I had never fired at an animal of the size of a deer in my life; and I now felt myself laboring under more excitement than I had anticipated; much of which, however, I attributed to my eager desire to convince the old trapper that he had greatly underrated my hunting qualities. On reaching the knoll, or ridge, I made a cautious ascent, through tangled brush and brambles, fearful lest each snap of a dry stick or twig might alarm the wary game. At length I reached the summit; and crawling carefully on my hands and knees over a ledge of rocks, I parted some intervening bushes, and, to my great delight, beheld four sleek, beautiful deer, daintily cropping the green herbage within fifty yards of me. I now became so nervously excited, that my long rifle shook like an aspen, as I slowly pushed the muzzle forward, preparatory to a fatal aim. I had just got my nerves a little quieted, and was in the act of glancing along the barrel, with my breath suspended, when I heard a loud, ominous rattle close to my side. I started with a thrill of horror, and a single glance showed me an enormous rattlesnake, partly coiled, with head erect, forked tongue, and fiery eyes, within three feet of me. To say that I sprung to my feet, and went down the

other side of the hill, regardless of alarming the deer, in the shortest possible time, is only to admit that the instincts of nature acted for my preservation, without calling upon reason, or any of the slow, operating faculties.

It is no use to deny it—I was scared. I felt cold chills run down my back, and my hair gather itself on end; while my legs displayed a power of locomotion, as they bore me through the valley below and after the flying deer, which even my long familiarity with them had previously failed to discover and place to their credit. I will not say I ran; for to run, even from a rattlesnake, would by some be considered cowardly; but I will venture to assert, that, in, Western parlance, "I did some pretty tall walking." Ere I reached the opposite slope, my rifle and hat went off at the same instant—the one in front, the other behind. As I stopped and stooped for my hat, something whizzed over my head; and immediately after, I heard the report of a rifle; while from a thicket, distant some hundred and fifty or two hundred yards, I saw a wreath of thin blue smoke float lazily upward and disperse in the light breeze.

Here was another narrow escape from another danger, and for the time being the rattlesnake was driven from my mind. I had evidently been shot at by a good marksman, and the stooping for my hat had saved my life. But why had I been shot at? and by whom? I was in a region of country thinly peopled by Indians; but then they were known to be

friendly to the whites, and were living on lands ceded to them by our Government. Had I been mistaken for a deer? I glanced down at my green hunting frock, and fringed buckskin trousers, and could fancy no resemblance to that innocent quadruped, except in the quickness with which I had lifted one foot after the other from among the tall grass.

Suddenly, a horrible suspicion seized me. Wolfy Jake, who was out hunting deer like myself, had probably seen me, and sought to gratify his malignant passions by a cold-blooded murder. I shuddered all over as the thought flashed through my mind, and I made all haste to bury myself in the brushwood of the swell or ridge toward which I had shaped my flight from my more magnanimous foe, and which fortunately was within fifty yards of where I had made my second escape from an awful death.

Being now fairly screened by a dense copse, I drew a long, quavering breath of momentary relief, and proceeded to reload my rifle with a trembling hand; while my knees knocked together from a sort of nervous weakness, and a cold, clammy perspiration seemed to start from every pore. My rifle again loaded, I felt my courage again return; and with the reaction from an almost paralytic surprise and terror, came a wicked indignation; and as my blood again leaped through its natural channels, with a burning sensation, I solemnly resolved, if I discovered Stericks anywhere in the vicinity, to shoot him down as I would a wild beast.

This was not a very Christian-like intention, I know; and under less excitement, I should never have so determined; but I was not then in a condition to reason calmly on a matter involving crime. I was beyond the limits of civilization, and in a country where the strong arm, keen eye, and sure rifle must stand me in place of law. My life had been sought; I had the right of self-protection, by any and every means; and the fact of his being in the vicinity, would have then been sufficient proof to my mind, that he alone was the deadly foe whom personal safety required me to destroy.

Fortunately for my subsequent peace of mind, to say nothing worse, I did not discover him. I crept through the bushes to a point whence I could overlook the covert from which the smoke had issued, and also the adjacent country; but though I kept a careful watch till the sun, large and red, went down behind the western line of earth and sky, I saw no human being. The gathering shades of night now warned me that it was high time to set out upon my return to camp; and looking carefully to the priming of my rifle, and laying my course with my eye, I was soon hastening through the tall grass of the valley already mentioned. Avoiding Rattlesnake Ridge, as I mentally christened the point of my first peril, I kept along the hollow some half a mile, and then turned off to the right, over what I supposed to be the very undulations I had previously traversed.

So confident was I of pursuing the proper direc-

tion, and so occupied was my mind with the startling events of the last few hours, that the possibility of missing my way did not occur to me till night had fairly set in; when suddenly looking up and around, a moment's reflection convinced me that I had already passed over more ground than lay in a direct line between the furthest point I had visited and the camp. Instantly a glow of heat passed over me, a new alarm thrilled through me, and I fairly shuddered at the thought that perhaps I was lost.

CHAPTER VII.

A THRILLING ADVENTURE.

Lost in the wilderness! Lost on the prairie! What terrible associations are linked with these two phrases, in the mind of him who has ever experienced their heart-sickening reality! No situation, probably, in which a human being can be placed, can more forcibly bring home to him the enervating, overpowering sense of human littleness and human helplessness—the crushing, blasting sense of loneliness and desolation—than being completely lost in the awful solitudes of nature. He looks around him, as far as his strained and aching sight can reach, and beholds solitude stretching away and away, seemingly limitless; he looks above him, and beholds the heavens spread with

cheerless grandeur over all; while excited fancy places him in the immediate presence of the Great Principle which wrought a world from chaos; and standing there, a conscious atom of the Universe, his sins, like culprits, rise up before him, and ready conscience pronounces a severe judgment—a judgment from which there is no appeal to human sympathy. Time misspent—wrongs committed—all the errors of a life passed in the whirl and turmoil of a human vortex—now rise up for dispassionate review; and his inner-self writes the sentence that expels him from all that is pure and holy.

It was not my misfortune, in the present instance, to experience all these sensations in the full poignancy of despair—for I did not, for a moment, consider myself lost beyond hope—but I felt enough to make me wretched. That I should find my companions, either soon or late, I did not doubt—for I had not as yet advanced far enough into the wilderness to preclude the possibility of a sudden return to the settlement I had left in the morning, where I could procure another horse and take a fresh start upon the broad trail; but should I find them during the night that had now just dropped its dark curtains around me? And if not, what physical sufferings might result to myself! and what prostrating, mental anguish to my dear friend! who had already begun to cling to me, and put his hope in me—as the mariner puts his trust in the bark which bears him over the great deep—and to whom, therefore, my absence would be a source of grief and

alarm, that would banish sleep from his debilitated frame! And for myself, I was much fatigued with my day's ride, foot-ramblings, and intense nervous excitement, and felt the need of both food and rest. With the exception of a single sea-biscuit, I had eaten nothing since morning; and the keen, gnawing sense of hunger, which I now experienced, brought additional dejection to my oppressed spirits.

But it was folly to stand idle, or sit down and brood over my misfortune; and so, collecting all my forces with a will, both mental and physical, I determined to find the camp, if it were possible to be found. Ascending the highest knoll or ridge in my immediate vicinity, I surveyed the landscape in every direction, as far as my sight could penetrate in the star-light darkness—but saw nothing to determine my course. I shouted with the whole strength of my lungs—but only the echo of my voice, the hooting of some owl, or the dismal howl of a distant wolf, came back in answer. I discharged my rifle—but my hearing remained unrejoiced by another report; and reloading my piece, I again set off, taking a more westerly course.

In a few minutes I came upon a small stream of water, which I supposed to be the same that flowed past our camp—but could not decide whether that camp were above or below. Being undetermined, I mounted another elevation, and away to the westward discerned a light, which I believed to proceed from the fire of a camp—but whether from the one I was in search of or not, I could not say. At all events, it

was a welcome sight, for it showed the locality of human beings; and with my eyes riveted upon it, with as eager a gaze as ever miser bestowed upon his gold, I made all haste over the intervening ground, and reached it within a quarter of an hour after making the discovery.

It proved to be the camp of a party of emigrants and traders, united for the journey, on their way to New Mexico. There were some twenty or thirty wagons in all, which were arranged in a circular form, in regular order, on the bank of a little creek, the side next to the water being left open. Here, at different fires, the several parties, or families, were having prepared their evening meal—the women, some eight or ten in number, being the principal cooks; while the men were packing and unpacking, smoking, lounging, and looking after their animals, which were picketed within rifle range. As I drew near the camp, no one seemed to take any notice of me; and before I had addressed any one, my attention became arrested and riveted upon an object, that for the time caused me to forget where I was and what I sought.

In the full blaze of a bright fire, over which was suspended a kettle, which she seemed to be watching, stood a pale, delicate, but beautiful girl, of perhaps sixteen or seventeen years, bare-foot, and clad in coarse garments. The style of her dress was rather Mexican than American, and consisted of a scarlet petticoat, with a full, flowing sack, which covered her bust and a portion of her arms, and fell half way below

the waist, around which it was secured by a blue belt —thus giving her a somewhat fanciful and picturesque appearance. The usual appendage of the head—the long muffler, or rebozo—was wanting; and her long raven ringlets fell in wanton profusion around her pale face, neck and shoulders.

But it was the expression of that pale face which riveted my gaze. The features were fine and beautiful, seemingly intellectual, but melancholy to a degree. They did not lack soul, but lacked the soul of happiness. They seemed as if a blight had fallen upon the young heart—as if a secret sorrow were nestled in the soul. The eyes were large, dark, full and dreamy; and beaming through long, drooping lashes, the expression was very sweet and fascinating—the more fascinating, perhaps, that its constant sadness seemed to demand constant sympathy.

As I stood somewhat in the shade, and silently regarding her, I could not but fancy that some fairy had been expelled from her bright realm, and been doomed for a season to wander over an unsympathizing, uncongenial world. I felt a strange interest in her—an interest for which I could not account. I had never before experienced such peculiar sensations in the presence of one of her sex. It was as if some unknown superhuman force were drawing me to her, and compelling the conviction that her destiny and mine were in some unaccountable manner united. For a time I was fascinated—spell-bound. What could it mean?

I aroused myself, with a start of surprise, and, without a moment's reflection, advanced straight to her side.

"Fair being," said I, "who are you?"

My voice broke her reverie—for until I spoke she did not perceive me. She looked up suddenly, and for a moment her soft, dark eyes timidly rested upon mine. I felt a strange thrill pass through every nerve and fibre of my system, and a strong impulse to rush forward and clasp her in my arms. What did it all mean? and what foolish thing might I have done, had my magnetic infatuation continued without interruption! But it was harshly interrupted.

"Who are you, stranger? and what do you want?" demanded a gruff voice, that instantly transported me from Paradise to Pandemonium.

I started, and my fairy shrank timidly away. I looked around, and discovered that the voice proceeded from a black-haired, swarthy, ill-favored, very earthly-looking human being, who was reclining on the ground near one of the wagons. He had a pipe in his hand, from which, as he spoke, he knocked the ashes; and gathering himself upon his feet, he came swaggering forward to where I stood. His height was about five feet ten inches, his frame bony, his features cadaverous, his eye black and devilish, and his age about forty-five years.

"Were you addressing yourself to me, sir?" I inquired, in a subdued tone; while I felt certain that a close examination would discover anything but

a pleasant mood in my flushed face and flashing eyes.

"Yes," he gruffly replied; "I was talking to you, and to nobody else! I want to know who you are? and what you want?"

"And I want to know what right you have to make the inquiry?" returned I.

"I'll let you know, —— soon, if you don't give me a straight-forward, civil answer."

"When you put your questions in that courteous manner which is due from one gentleman to another," said I, "I will answer you civilly and correctly; but if you think to bully me into a gentlemanly reply, you have mistaken your man."

"Well, I want no more words with you!" he rejoined, biting his lip; "so take yourself off! Away with you now!"

"I am not used to being ordered away like a dog," said I.

"Well, you had better get used to it then—for a decent dog is worth two of you!"

"You are an insolent scoundrel!" said I.

"By ——! no man tells me that and lives," he fairly shouted with rage; and as he spoke, he darted to his wagon and seized his rifle.

Ere he could bring it to a level, my fairy, who had been standing back, a witness of all that had taken place, suddenly bounded forward, with a scream, and, seizing his arms, exclaimed:

"Oh! don't shoot him, father! for God's sake, don't shoot him!"

"Back, spawn of a hell-cat!" he cried, gnashing his teeth with fury; and raising his hand, he dealt her a blow on the side of the head which laid her prostrate on the earth.

I could bear no more; I was beside myself with a thousand wild fancies; my brain was in a whirl; I thought of nothing but that I was in a country without law, where my life had twice been sought; that my angel protector had been struck down by a demon in the human form; that it was his life or mine; and bringing my piece to a level, I darted forward, and discharged it within ten feet of his breast.

He fell. I saw him fall, and heard him groan. But I stood as one paralyzed. What had I done? Had I committed murder?

"Oh, sir! oh, sir! you have killed him!" broke in the sweet, mournful voice of the being for whose life I would have given mine; and seemingly unmindful of the foul, brutal blow she had herself received, she crawled to him, and bent over him—affectionately, I fancied, she bent over the prostrate monster whom she had called father, and whom my act had laid low, perhaps in death.

I stood transfixed—my eyes riveted upon two objects—an angel and a demon. There came a rush of feet—a buzz of voices. Shadowy spectres seemed to flit past the different firelights—to the right—to the left—before, and behind. I was soon surrounded;

my strained sight no longer rested upon the angel and the demon; other objects intervened; I felt rude hands grasp me, and comprehended that I was being hurried away.

All this, I think, occupied no more time than I have in recording it; and I was finally aroused from a kind of mental lethargy, by words uttered in a tone of stern reproof and inquiry.

"Young man, you have probably killed one of our party? Who are you? how came you here? and what led you to shoot Gaspard Loyola?"

I looked up, and saw myself surrounded by some ten or twelve strong, muscular, hardy, bronze-featured, resolute men. The speaker was advanced in years, and had iron-gray hair, and a commanding appearance. To him I addressed my reply.

"Sir!" said I—"most deeply do I regret the sad occurrence of which you speak; and half an hour since, I should have regarded as insane the man who had predicted that I was on the point of staining my hands with the blood of a total stranger."

I then proceeded to state who I was; whence I came; the peculiar circumstances which had led me to their camp; the cause of my quarrel with the person they called Loyola; and how, while acting in self-defence, I had been governed by a kind of insane impulse.

"I think Mr. Rivers speaks the truth," said one of the party; "for you know this Loyola makes it a point to quarrel with every one who crosses his path;

and I myself heard a portion of the conversation just repeated, and saw the Spaniard run for his rifle, and knock down the girl for interfering."

"He deserves all he's got!" said another, with an oath.

"We will examine the girl," rejoined the first speaker, "and if she corroborates the statement of the young man, we must acquit him."

Leaving some three or four of the party with me, as a kind of guard, he then walked away with the others, to where the wounded man was lying.

"I feel faint," said I, to those remaining with me; "I have scarcely tasted food since morning: will you permit me to sit upon the ground?"

"Come with me," returned one, "and I will give you food."

He led the way to a wagon, on the opposite side of the camp, where his supper—which he was in the act of devouring, when interrupted by the general alarm—was still spread out on the end-board—the latter being turned down and supported horizontally, to serve as a table. The repast before me consisted of hot coffee, with sugar—a great luxury in the wilderness—a freshly baked corn-cake, and several smoking slices of meat, with salt. He got another cup and poured it full of coffee—first asking me if I would take some whiskey, which I declined.

"Eat, young man," he said, in a kindly tone; "you are welcome."

I did not feel the same keen appetite as when wandering over the rolling prairie; but being very

faint, I considered it essential to take food to sustain nature. Accordingly, I drank off half the coffee at once, and then ate a few mouthfuls of the corn-cake and meat—which, owing to the weak and nervous state of my system, I swallowed with difficulty, and with a sensation of nausea.

While thus engaged, the wife of my kind and hospitable entertainer, who gave me his name as Phillips, came running up and exclaimed:

"William, they think he'll die, though he is still alive."

I staggered at the words; for till now, knowing Loyola to be alive, I had some hope that his wound would not prove mortal; and had Phillips not caught me, I should have fallen to the ground.

"Hush, Martha!" he said to his wife; "have you no regard for the young man's feelings?"

"I beg your pardon, sir!" returned the woman, addressing me in a kindly tone. "I did not think before I spoke. But nobody seems to blame you: they say you did it in self-defence."

"God forbid the man should die!" groaned I, sinking down upon a box, in great distress of mind.

Mr. Phillips, and the men who were with him, used such words as they could to console me; but I had a terrible consciousness, that, should the man die, I should never know peace of mind again. While they were yet talking to me, the venerable head of the party—for such he was by election—returned and said:

"Mr. Rivers, you stand honorably acquitted of crime. The testimony of Adele corroborates yours; you acted in self-defence; and though I think you might, by prudence, have avoided the tragic quarrel, I take pleasure in adding, that I am empowered, by the verdict of twelve of our party, to discharge you from custody."

"Will the man die?" inquired I.

"The wound, which is in the right breast, is thought to be mortal."

"Then God arrests me, and takes the case to the High Court of Eternity!" I groaned, feeling most deeply the pangs of remorse and despair.

CHAPTER VIII.

ADELE AND MYSTERY.

I HAVE, in the course of my adventurous life, passed through many trying scenes—scenes of horror, scenes of peril, and scenes of acute physical and mental suffering; but I do not think I have ever experienced more real soul-torture in the same time, than during the first two hours succeeding the announcement of the venerable Captain Hillyard, that Gaspard Loyola had received from my hands what was supposed to be a mortal wound. It was in vain that persons of both sexes gathered around, and strove to console me,

by declaring that I was not to blame—that the act was one of self-defence—and that I must have been more than human, or an arrant coward, to have done otherwise than I did. I knew in my own heart that I could have avoided taking a fellow-creature's life; that I could have borne an insult, and walked quietly away from the insulter; and my conscience condemned me for allowing my passions and impulses to prevail over my reason, judgment, and education. I had begun my career of manhood by deliberately thwarting the wishes of my father—and here was one early and awful result of the first wrong step. I had been brought up to regard the life of man as the gift of God, which no human being had a right to destroy; I had not yet been long enough beyond the reach of law to have my keen sensibilities dulled; and consequently I felt that the deed I had done, however justifiable in the eyes of man, was a heinous sin in the sight of Him who had given the stern decree, amid the smoke, the lightnings, and the thunders of Mount Sinai—"*Thou shalt not kill!*"

For two hours, I say, I sat buried in the most intense agony of mind—with remorse and despair, like an incubus, upon my heart—the most wretched of all wretched beings—when word was brought me that the ball had been extracted from the breast of Loyola, and that, though dangerous, the wound was thought not necessarily mortal. The parched traveller in the desert, when his eye falls upon the cool waters of a spring; the lost mariner, drifting for days on the

great deep, when he finds himself discovered by a friendly sail; or the drowning man, when he beholds a rope within his grasp; leaps not more suddenly from despair to hope—from misery to joy—than did I at this unexpected announcement.

"Great God, let him live!" was my first ejaculation; and if ever a sincere prayer came from the heart, that came from mine. "Can I be permitted to see him?" I inquired.

There was some consultation among three or four leading members of the party, and then I was answered in the affirmative. I hastened to the wounded man, and found him lying upon his back, on a rude bed, in his own wagon, his eyes closed, his face pale from loss of blood, and his respiration somewhat difficult and irregular. By his side knelt the beautiful Adele, with a green bush in her hand, which she was slowly waving to and fro, to keep off the musquitoes, and other night insects, which had already, in this part of the country, become very troublesome. I saw them both by the light of a glass lantern, which depended from one of the ribs of the covered vehicle; and its pale gleams, falling upon their pale faces, and upon the rough, uncouth surroundings, and only faintly revealing the sober features of others peering in at the opposite end, presented a picture of death-like solemnity, which haunted me for days, and even now rises vividly before the eye of the mind. I drew back with a shudder, and addressed myself to a person standing near.

"Can I be permitted to speak a word with the daughter of Loyola?" I inquired.

"I think so; but do not speak too loud, for I reckon Loyola is asleep."

"No! not there, my friend: do me the favor to ask her to step outside."

He did as I requested; and getting some one to take her place, Adele descended from the wagon.

"This way!" said I, in a tremulous voice: "let us step aside! I wish to speak a few words with you privately."

She seemed not a little agitated; but silently, and with downcast eyes, complied with my request. I led her toward the centre of the camp, that she might have no fear; and the moment I thought we could converse without being overheard, I stopped, and gently taking her hand, said:

"Adele—for so I understand you are called—this is a terrible affair to both of us; and no one can know what agonies I have suffered, in consequence, during the last two hours; and yet, properly considered, I know not that I am to blame. I did not come here with the intention of quarreling, but because I had lost my way; you yourself were the first with whom I spoke; and God knows, Adele, I had anything but a wicked design in my heart at that moment. Your singular beauty—nay, start not, and think I am passing unmeaning compliments, for my soul is too heavy to deal in frivolities!—your singular beauty, I say, united, as it is, with a melancholy expression of sor-

row, demanding sympathy, arrested my attention, and attracted me to your side; and what followed you know. My life was menaced; and, but for your interposition, would undoubtedly have been taken. I saw you foully struck to the earth; I knew that blow was given on my account; and excited to that point where reason is lost in frenzy, I darted forward and shot down the aggressor. Can you forgive me for an act done as much upon your account as my own, Adele?"

She drooped her head, and sobbingly replied:

"Oh, yes, I forgive you—because, as you say, you did not intend anything wrong when you came and spoke to me; and my father—God and the Saints forgive him also!—forced you to quarrel, and would certainly have killed you, in his rage, had you not disabled him. He is a very passionate man, sir; and when he has been drinking freely, as he had to-day, is very much disposed to quarrel, even with his friends; but I trust you will forgive him, too, sir!"

The voice of the fair speaker was low and silvery, and had a melancholy sweetness which touched my heart. Her accent was slightly foreign; but she spoke my native language with an ease and fluency that argued a long familiarity with it; and, from various causes, I found myself most deeply interested in her and her hard fortune.

"For your sake, Adele," I replied, "I will and do forgive him—though through him I have been led to the commission of a deed which may render the rest of my life unhappy; for should he die, the awful re-

membrance, that my hand had sent a fellow-being to eternity, would ever haunt me."

"And should he recover," rejoined my fair companion, with a shudder, "I hope and pray you may never meet again! for if he found the opportunity, he would certainly take your life."

"Is he then so revengeful?"

"Alas! yes: he never forgives any one that he has ever looked upon as an enemy."

"And is it possible that he can be your father? that the blood of a man of such vindictive passions flows in the veins of one so fair and pure, forgiving and gentle, as yourself?"

"Really," said Adele, with some agitation, withdrawing her hand—which till this moment had, with seeming unconsciousness on her part, rested in mine: "Really, I must go back! I am afraid he will wake and ask for me; and then he will get excited, seeing others about, and excitement now might prove fatal to him."

"You must not go yet!" said I, detaining her. "Stay a few minutes longer, I pray you! I am about to leave you, and may never see you again; and I would like very much to have you answer me a few questions."

"Are you going away to-night?" she timidly inquired, but in a tone that indicated surprise; and looking up as she spoke, I saw, by a gleam of firelight that fell upon her pale face, that a deeper shade

of sorrow rested upon it, and that her dark, dreamy eyes were swimming in tears.

"I must leave to-night, Adele, or very early in the morning, to search for my friends."

And then, in as few words as I could, I told her who I was, and what chance, accident, or Providence, had brought me to the camp. She listened attentively, earnestly, sadly.

"And now," continued I, "will you not so far confide in me, as to say whether or not Gaspard Loyola is your father?"

"Why do you ask?" she said, quickly.

"Because I take more than a passing interest in you, and much desire to know something of your history; and because, as I said before, I cannot bring myself to believe that his blood flows in your veins."

"Well," sighed Adele, "I do not know. I have been told that he is my father, and I have been told that he is not."

"If there is any doubt, Adele, in the name of humanity, give it for the negative—do not consider such a brutal wretch the author of your existence! Excuse me for speaking plainly and boldly! I saw him strike you to the earth, with the blow of a cowardly ruffian, when your only offence was an attempt to withhold him from the commission of murder; and it was that brutal act, I think, rather than fear for my own safety, that impulsively urged me on to a deed which I have since repented of in the deepest agonies of remorse and despair. But mark you! I had no

sympathy for him; nor have I now—strange and anomalous as it may seem; my contrition was for having shot down, and probably killed, a fellow-being, when I might either have avoided the quarrel, or beat him down, and severely punished him, without taking life. If God spares him, I shall not regret being the cause of his retributive sufferings; and though, for your sake, and on account of those sufferings, I will pardon his design upon my life, yet my sympathies will be with you only. Do you understand me?"

"I think I do, sir!" she timidly replied, casting down her eyes.

"So far as you are concerned, mark me—in so much as his sufferings may cause you pain—shall I sympathize—no more. I would have him live; but live to repentance; live to know and feel that life is not given for the mere gratification of hellish desires and passions; not given to the strong to be used against the weak; not given for the purpose of making all around him miserable. And now tell me, Adele, can I be of any service to you? I have been the unfortunate cause of bringing fresh trouble upon one who has seen much sorrow; and if I can in any manner serve you, I am in honor and duty bound to do so."

"I thank you, for your kind offer!" half sobbed the afflicted girl; "but I do not know of anything you can do for me."

"I pray you to have no hesitation in answering frankly; for though I am a stranger, whose brief

acquaintance you have made under circumstances the most painful, not to say horrible—under circumstances rather calculated to excite your antipathy than regard —yet I solemnly assure you, I would peril my life to do you a favor."

Adele burst into tears, but made no reply.

"Why do you weep?" I said, taking her hand again, and impulsively drawing her to me. "There is something you wish to tell me. Speak out, I pray you!"

But she only wept and sobbed the more.

"Adele," I continued, "you are young; I am several years your senior; do not be afraid to confide in me; speak as to a brother; and I solemnly assure you, you shall not find your confidence misplaced! Tell me, Adele—why do you weep?"

"Because," she sobbed, "you speak so kindly to me—so like a true friend; and I am not used to kindness; and I never had a friend—or if I ever had, it was a long, long time ago."

"Poor girl!" said I; "no wonder your features are stamped with sorrow! But you shall not want a friend again, while I live and have the power to serve you. Let me be your brother! Will you let me be your brother, Adele?"

"Oh, no! I dare not! my father would kill us both!" she said, wringing her hands. "He does not allow me to speak to any one but himself; and it was because you came and spoke to me, that he became so angry with you."

"But you need not fear him now, Adele," I said, with something like secret exultation—for the more I learned of the base character of Loyola, the less I regretted my hasty deed: "you need not fear him now; it will be a long time, should he eventually recover, before he will regain sufficient strength to interfere with us, or again misuse you; and should he ever attempt the latter again, in my presence, he must again abide the consequences!"

"Oh! you do not know him!" cried Adele: "and you must avoid him; for should he recover, and ever see you again, he would find some way to take your life! But you said you were going away!"

"True, so I am. I have a friend, who is even now miserable because of my absence; and I must find him as soon as I can; but the party to which I belong cannot be far from yours; and as you will necessarily travel slow, on account of this dark man, whom you call your father, I shall endeavor to overtake you. Will you permit me to be your brother, and befriend you as a brother should?"

"I do not know; I am afraid; and yet I have often wished I had a brother," she sighed.

"Say no more then—it is settled; have no fear; I will be prudent; but I must see you, for I feel myself drawn to you in an unaccountable manner. And now, before we part, will you not confide in me, and tell me what you know of your history?"

"What shall I tell you?" she inquired, with a

startled air, looking cautiously around, as if fearful of a harsh interruption.

"Tell me what you remember of your history, Adele! Tell me where you were born; what has become of your mother; how long you have known this man you call father; how you became separated from your friends; and how long you have been engaged in this hard, perilous life, so unsuited to one of your years and delicate organization!"

"I could not answer all your questions if I would," she replied; "and even those I can answer, would take more time than can now be spared; and besides, I am afraid to tell what little I do know."

"Fear not, my poor Adele! I will protect you; and if wrong has been done you, as I have reason to believe, I will see you righted, or perish in the attempt. There is something mysterious in your past history, I feel assured—is it not so?"

"Yes! yes!" she answered, quickly; "there is something mysterious in my past life; I do not myself understand it; but ——"

"Speak, I pray you!" I urged, as she hesitated; "tell me all you know; and, rely upon it, you are confiding in a friend, who will not only keep your secret sacred, but will, so far as lies in his power, guard you from further oppression and wrong. Where were you born?"

"I do not know, sir!"

"Did no one ever tell you?"

"Not that I remember, sir!"

"What are your earliest recollections?"

"I have a confused recollection—it is like a dream—of being in a place of splendor, where there were a great many persons coming and going, and where kind words were always spoken to me."

"Do you refer to a dwelling, or a city?"

"I think it must have been a dwelling—and it might have been in a city—but I do not know. I remember walking over a marble floor, and seeing beautiful flowers, and fountains, and paintings; and one, more than all the rest, dear, sweet face, which I think was my mother's; but all the rest is confused, and perhaps it was all a dream."

"I think not," said I, most deeply interested: "Children, too young to distinguish the real from the ideal, are not apt to dream of such realities and retain the impression for years. Does your memory connect this place with a southern climate?"

"I have no recollection concerning the climate, sir!"

"Have you any remembrance of feeling cold there? of seeing any thing like snow?"

"Oh, no, sir! it seems as if it were summer-time; for the trees were always green, and the flowers were always bright—at least I cannot recall them as being otherwise."

"And do you remember leaving this beautiful place?"

"No, sir! I have often tried to do so, but I cannot; and that leads me to think it might have been a dream."

"Well, what next do you remember?"

"Something dark and awful!" said Adele, with a perceptible shudder. "It seems as if I were in a dark place, like a prison, and was rolling about, and felt very sick, and heard the roar of winds and the rush of waters."

"For how long a time were you in this dark and awful place?"

"I do not know, sir! but it seems as if it were a long time."

"Does it seem as if you were in a ship on the ocean?"

"I cannot say: I only remember what I have told you."

"Well, what is your next impression, or recollection?"

"I remember being in a convent, and having certain lessons to recite to a tall, stern, austere woman; and likewise having a good many religious duties to perform. I learned to read and write there, in Spanish, Latin and English."

"Which language did you use in common conversation?"

"Oh, the Spanish."

"Was that your native language?"

"I think so."

"How long did you remain at this convent?"

"'Till I was ten years of age."

"And what were you called while there?"

"Adele."

"And did no one tell you anything of your history?"

"No, sir! I one day inquired of the abbess who I was; but she only frowned, and said she knew nothing of worldly affairs; and that it mattered not who I was, so I conducted myself properly."

"Well, you were in the convent, you say, till you were ten years of age—how came you to leave?"

"My father came and took me away."

"Had you ever seen him before that time?"

"I did not remember his face."

"How did you know he was your father?"

"He and the abbess both said so."

"And was he the same person now in yonder wagon?"

"Yes."

"Well, you said, a few minutes since, you had been told he is not your father—who told you so?"

"Sister Agnes—one of the nuns."

"Did she know anything of him? or of your history?"

"No! but she saw him at the convent, and heard the abbess speak of him as my father; and she said to me, before I left, that she knew he could not be my father, for there was no resemblance between us; and that one like myself could never have had being from so dark and wicked-looking a man!"

"And depend upon it, my poor Adele, Sister Agnes was right!" said I. "Nature could not so falsify, as

to produce, from such a cause, such an effect—so totally at variance, in person, mind, and innate principle."

"Oh!" exclaimed Adele, again looking hurriedly around—"I must go! I must not remain here another moment. Suppose he should wake, and find me absent? and suppose any one should inform him of my interview with you, here, alone? He might, in a moment of passion, do me a serious injury!"

"He shall not," said I; "for I am going to take your case in hand: you shall not remain with him to be maltreated!"

"Oh, sir! I could not leave him!"

"Why not? You do not, you cannot, have any regard for him?"

"I do not know; perhaps he is my father; he says he is."

"And even grant that he is—he has sundered every tie, human and divine, that should bind a child to a parent. You do not feel any affection for him, do you, Adele?"

"Sometimes, sir, I think I do, when he speaks pleasantly to me."

"That is not properly affection, my poor Adele; but is rather a grateful sense, arising from the absence of fear. You know that you are in his power—that he is generally harsh and cruel; you fear him in consequence; and when, for a time, he gives you cause not to fear him, you feel so grateful, that it seems as if you almost loved him: is it not so?"

"I think, perhaps, that is it, sir!" she replied.

"It is your nature to love, Adele; your heart is warm; you feel the want of that iron strength and will which can give adversity strong battle; and, like the tender, drooping vine, you must needs twine around the hardy, storm-enduring oak for support. It has never been my fortune to meet another of so sweet, so gentle, so loving, so forbearing, and so forgiving a disposition as yourself. Nay, do not think I am paying unmeaning compliments for an evil purpose; I mean what I say; and what I say, I know to be true; for it is all stamped on your soul, and your soul is seen in your face. Your countenance is an open book, easily read by one who has made human nature a study. But time is precious, and I would know more of your history. What was the name of the convent where you received your education?"

"Santa Maria."

"Where was it located?"

"I am not certain about the location, but I think it was in the interior of Mexico."

"And where did you go after leaving there?"

Just at this moment a voice called Adele.

"There!" she exclaimed, hurriedly, and in a tone of alarm; "I feared it would be so; he has awakened; good-bye!" and she darted away to the wagon.

I followed more leisurely, and cautiously looked in at one end of the vehicle, keeping my features in the shade, so that I might not be seen and recognised by Loyola, who was not only awake, but giving evidence of some strength, and a devilish disposition, by scold-

ing Adele in Spanish. I could not understand what he said; but the tone in which he spoke, and the manner of the poor girl, who was trembling and weeping, were enough to assure me that he was playing the base tyrant, and wounding her gentle, sensitive soul, by using harsh and vicious language. He was lying upon his left side, his head supported by his left hand, while his right clasped and pressed the bandage over the wound. I could just dimly see his features—dark, scowling, and malignant—the muscles contorting with anger and pain—the black, beetling brows knitted, and the small, black, sunken eyes emitting gleams of malice; and I thought that Satan, if not more wicked than he has been represented, might have had his likeness taken by proxy. Adele, as I have said, who was crouching, trembling and weeping by his side, suddenly hastened, as if by an order, to hand him a cup of water from a bucket near; and no sooner had he drank, than the cup was hurled at her head, barely missing it by an inch.

I could bear to see no more; I dared not longer trust myself in such a presence; and I quietly hastened away—feeling, after what I had just witnessed, that my conscience would no longer condemn me, even should my deed result in ridding the world of a demon incarnate.

CHAPTER IX.

RETURN TO CAMP.

THE camp had now become comparatively still, the different fires were gradually dying out, and most of the tired wayfarers had retired to rest, some under cover of the different wagons, and many in the open air, with only a blanket spread on the earth for a bed, and a stone, a log, a saddle, or whatever was at hand, for a pillow. A few were still strolling about outside of the wagons, keeping watch over the horses, mules and cattle, which were getting their fill of the luxuriant grass along the little valley of the rippling stream, and which were soon to be driven in and picketed close around the camp. The night was warm and close, with scarcely a breath of air stirring; and though cloudless overhead, a thin haze, gradually thickening with vapors rising from the earth, permitted only the brighter stars to be dimly visible, and betokened the final eclipse of all.

Among those still astir, I found Mr. Phillips. He was sitting, a la Turque, on the ground, by his wagon, smoking his pipe, and repairing some portion of a harness by the light of a lantern. As I had had little conversation with any one save Adele, owing to my depressed state of mind after shooting Loyola, I now approached him, for the purpose of making some important inquiries.

"Well, my friend," he said, in a kindly tone, looking up from his work as I drew near—"how is it with you now?"

"I feel much better, I thank you!" was my reply. "I have had some conversation with Adele, of an important nature, and have just come from looking in upon the wounded ruffian—for I cannot call him, after what I have just witnessed, by any gentler term. If it be true, as some physicians assert, that ill-temper is a sign the invalid is in no immediate danger of dying, then I think *his* life might be insured at a very small per centage."

"You found him savage, did you?"

"Yes, savage is a very good term; unless, in applying it to him, it scandalizes the natives of this region;" and I proceeded to give an account of his late brutal treatment of Adele.

"Poor girl!" said Phillips, sympathetically; "I wish she were beyond his reach!"

"How is it," I inquired, "that you permit such a brute of a man to travel in such respectable company? for all the rest of you, that I have seen, appear to have human feelings."

"Why, the fact is," answered Phillips, "though we travel together, for mutual protection against our common enemy, the Indians, we are all separate traders, each man owning his team and freight, which he disposes of to please himself. I say all; but I should except some four or five families, now going out to Santa Fe with us, for permanent settlement. I am

one that have been in this line of trade for a couple of years. About a year ago, this Loyola, whom we first saw in San Miguel, begged the privilege of being allowed to join us. Some objected; but on a vote being taken, the decision was in his favor. He brought this girl, whom he calls his daughter, with him; and with the exception of sometimes treating her rather harshly, and being, now and then, especially when he has been drinking, sullen, savage, and quarrelsome, he has behaved himself pretty well, and kept within the rules and regulations by which we are governed. With a man's private affairs, if he does not intrude upon and disturb his neighbors, our general law has nothing to do—our motto being, 'each one mind his own business;' and though few of us like Loyola as a man—and all of us more or less pity the poor girl, who is kept under the most savage restraint, not being permitted to speak to any one without the consent of her father—yet, according to the code which binds us together, no one has a right to interfere in his domestic matters."

"And does not common humanity authorize you to interfere, when a poor, innocent girl is the recipient of a ruffian's blows?" inquired I, with some asperity.

"I never knew him to strike and knock her down before to-night, and I think you will admit he is pretty well punished for that."

"Yes," I replied, "and I am now inclined to believe he got no more than he deserved."

"So I have heard several say already. If you had not punished him severely, Mr. Rivers, you may rest assured he would have met the proper chastisement from other quarters, and that is why your act is viewed so leniently. If he recovers, he will have to carry himself pretty straight hereafter, or he will find himself expelled from the company. Even as it is, I have heard several declare, that if he is to be permitted to travel with us, they will withdraw. I do not know how it will be. With the exception mentioned, Loyola is not a bad travelling companion. He has his good points. He never meddles with his neighbors' affairs, and a better Indian fighter it would be hard to find. Last winter, when we were attacked by the Camanches, he fought like a hero; and with rifle, pistols, and knife, killed four, and wounded two more, besides chasing the others, when they fled, further than any other white man dared to venture."

"I should suppose he would make a good fighter," said I, "and good Indian fighters are valuable. Do you know anything of his history?"

"Nothing—he is not communicative."

"Is the girl, Adele, generally supposed to be his daughter?"

"We know nothing to the contrary—though I have heard many express their doubts."

"And rightly, I judge. At all events, as I have taken a deep interest in her, I shall endeavor to see her again, and make some further inquiries, whether

he like it or not—that is, if others of your party have no reasonable objections."

"Loyola will have objections, you may rest assured; and you will have to be cautious, or your life may be the penalty. I believe he would shoot the man who interferes in his affairs, as he would a dog."

"There are two that can play at that game," said I, "as he already knows to his cost. But I will be cautious; and if others do not intermeddle, I think I can manage the matter very safely. And now, my friend, give me a candid, straight-forward answer. Should I ascertain that Adele has been removed from her friends—and I can, through her, find any clue to them, and wish to restore her, with her own consent, —do you think any of your party, save Loyola himself, would object to my taking her away?"

"Why, if satisfied of your intentions being perfectly honorable—as I doubt not they are—I do not think any one would; because, should the girl desire to leave, that would be her own business; but it would be better that none of our party rendered you any assistance; for I have seen enough of Loyola, to know that he would be a dangerous man to tamper with."

"I will ask no help beyond my own friends; and nothing shall be done to compromit any of your party; and as to my intentions toward the poor girl, if I do not mean her well, in every respect, may my tongue wither, and my eyes refuse me sight!"

"I see how it is!" rejoined Phillips, with a smile of meaning; "it is already whispered about that you are in love with the girl."

"Is it so?" returned I, with a start of surprise; for though I had been drawn to Adele in an unaccountable manner, I had never once thought of her in such a connection: "Then tell your friends they labor under a mistake. I never was in love in my life; and if I know myself, I am not now; but I have much sympathy for her, and I will do her a service if I can—though my feelings are rather those of a brother than a lover. I have just left home to see something of the world in the wilderness, and do not intend to fall in love for ten years to come—five, at least."

"Say what you will, Mr. Rivers," returned Phiilips, with a pleasant laugh, "you could not convince the women to the contrary—and they are pretty shrewd in matters pertaining to the heart. However, it is none of my business; though I venture to say, that you might fall in love with a less attractive girl, judging from the little I have seen of her."

"Pray do me the favor to undeceive your lady friends in this respect," said I. "And yet," I added, after a moment's reflection, "it may, on the whole, be best to let them think as they do."

"I think it will," laughed Phillips; "at least, I am certain nothing I could say would change their opinion; for I have seen enough of the sex to know, that if a woman has once fairly got a crotchet in her

head, all the reasoning powers of man, or angel, would not be sufficient to drive it out."

I continued my conversation with Mr. Phillips for some half an hour longer; and I found him, as I have shown him, a shrewd, intelligent man, with pleasing conversational powers, and an education superior to the majority of Western traders. He informed me that he was originally from one of the Eastern States; that he had been a merchant in St. Louis; but having failed in business, he had adopted his present mode of life in order to get another start in the world, and liberally educate his two boys, both of whom were now at college. His wife, by her own choice, accompanied him in his hard, perilous journeys back and forth across the plains; which at times made his travels more pleasant to him; and at others, especially when surrounded by danger, caused him extreme anxiety. He said he thought if he could get safely through another year, with the same good fortune in trade that had hitherto attended him, he would be able to start again in business in St. Louis, where he could have all the comforts of a happy home. I wished him success, with all my heart. He dealt partly in dry goods, and partly in teas, coffee and sugar—on all of which he made enormous profits—generally selling out at Santa Fe, and getting his pay in cash, or furs—which latter were even better than cash, because he realized on them a second profit on his return to the States. Most of those with him were Missourians—each, like himself, trading on his own account—and, like him-

self, most of them at home were men of some standing.

"Well," he said, at length, "it is time for us to turn in, for these hot days we must start early. I have no tempting accommodations to offer you; but I can lend you a blanket, and show you the soft side of a turf; and to such accommodations you must get accustomed, if you continue your journey over the prairies."

"I kindly thank you!" said I; "but I am still too much excited to sleep; and I think I will make another effort to find my own camp; it certainly cannot be far from here."

"By-the-by," he rejoined, "was your camp a little south of the regular trail?"

"Yes, about a quarter of a mile, in a very pleasant woodland-bottom, on the bank of a little stream."

"Had you a tent?"

"Yes!" I returned, quickly.

"Then we passed it about half an hour before sundown. I saw the tent, and called attention to it. It is about a mile and a half, or two miles, east of here."

"Then I can certainly find it," said I, joyfully; "and I must find it to-night; for my friend will not sleep till I return; and one night's loss of sleep will unfit him for to-morrow's journey."

"Well, if you think you had better go, I will not try to detain you, for I appreciate your feelings; but you scarcely tasted of your supper; so, for fear of accidents, I shall insist on your taking some food with you."

I gladly assented to his proposition, for I now began to feel a very keen appetite; and he hastened to procure me a large slice of meat, and one entire corn-cake—apologizing, at the same time, for not having anything better to offer me.

"And now," he said, giving my hand a hearty grip and shake, "I will bid you good-bye, with the hope that we shall meet again. You will probably overtake us—for we travel slow with teams—and I think your heart and Adele will hasten the meeting. And, my friend, should it chance that Loyola does not recover, do not be too much cast down! You acted on the defensive; and there is not one of us, probably, that would not have done as you did under the circumstances. If we have any human right more than another, it is the right to protect our own lives, by our own strong arms, in this wild, lawless country; and even in the settlements, you could not find a jury that would not, in your case, even had the man been killed outright, bring in a verdict of justifiable homicide. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, and God bless you, for proving yourself a friend in need!" I replied; and I spoke in a tremulous voice, and left him with tearful eyes.

On quitting the kind-hearted Phillips, I crossed over to Loyola's wagon, to take one parting look at the wounded man, and perhaps speak another word with Adele. While we had been conversing, one after another had betaken themselves to rest; and only here and there a person could be seen stirring; while

all the fires had gone out, or were smouldering in their own ashes. I approached the wagon cautiously, and stealthily, and quietly looked in. Loyola was lying on his left side, apparently asleep; and poor Adele, sitting on a box, with her back against a bale of goods, was nodding with drowsiness, though evidently struggling to keep herself awake, probably because she had been ordered to do so by her tyrannical master. I wished to say a parting word to her, but did not think it prudent to speak, and so withdrew as stealthily as I came.

Loyola's wagon was near the runlet or creek, which was the proper outlet to the camp; and springing over the tiny stream, I ascended the opposite slope, and once more found myself upon the broad, beaten trail. Here I remembered I had left my rifle at Phillips' wagon, and went back for it. He had just returned from looking at his animals, and was in the act of crawling into his vehicle. I exchanged another good-bye with him, and hastened away. Once more over the little stream, and upon the trail, I proceeded to load my rifle, and then set off eastward upon a run, so anxious was I to reach my camp and relieve the distress of my friend.

The night had now become quite dark. The rising vapors had completely veiled the heavens, and, stretching along the earth, like a cloud, had wrapped a close mantle around every object; so that the speed with which I had ventured to start, was suddenly checked by an obstruction, over which I went headlong, but

fortunately without breaking a bone, or seriously injuring my rifle. On gathering myself up, I came to the conclusion, that the race, in this case, might not be to the swift; and that the slightest variation from the trail, would be likely to detain me from my friend till morning, to say nothing worse; so I resumed my route at a very slow walk, and allowed my mind to run over in haste the events of the day.

And a most eventful day it had been to me. I had travelled twenty miles into a new country; had seen a trifle of wilderness life and sport; had quarreled twice; had been lost once; had three times narrowly escaped with my life; had shot a man, perhaps mortally; had received a brief trial and acquittal; and last, though not least, had, according to the opinions of some, fallen in love with a young and beautiful girl, whom I had for the first time beheld within the last three or four hours.

But was the inference, which had been drawn from my actions, a correct one? Was I in love with Adele Loyola? I did not think so. True, I had taken a strange interest in her; had felt peculiar sensations in her presence, which I had never before experienced in the presence of one of her sex; and I still regarded her, now that she was absent, as one of the brightest links in the chain of my existence; as one whom I was bound to snatch from a tyrannical master, and to succor and protect; but did it follow that I was in love? Was the feeling I had for her other than brotherly sympathy? other than I might have felt

toward another similarly circumstanced? Love! what was love? I knew nothing about it. I had never been in love in my life. I had always supposed it to be the passionate desire of two persons, of different sexes, to unite their fates and fortunes for the journey of life. Had I any such desire with regard to Adele? No! Had she any such wish or thought with respect to myself? Probably not. Did I wish to marry at all? and more especially the object of my present solicitude? No! Then how could I be in love? I was not. It was only mere fancy on the part of those who knew nothing of my nature.

Besides, when looking forward to an event which might possibly happen in the course of my life, though not yet for years, I had set up an ideal being in my mind—an ideal which I had never as yet seen in human form—an ideal as unlike Adele Loyola as any other of her sex. Then why think of love in connection with her? Pshaw! what folly! Who was she? I did not know: she did not know herself. I was interested in the mystery, of course; interested in her as an unfortunate being; interested in serving her, so far as lay in my power; interested in seeing her made happy; interested in wanting and retaining her good opinion: but it was the interest of a brother rather than a lover, or else warm friendship and ardent passion had not the marked distinction I had always supposed.

Thus I pondered, as, with slow pace and weary limbs I pursued my course—the deep cart-ruts of

the road, or trail, being sufficient guide to my steps, even though I could not perceive an object a foot from my eye. At length, on calculating time and progress, to the best of my ability, I came to the conclusion that I had advanced about far enough eastward to be on a line with the camp of my friend; but as I could see nothing in any direction, I began to feel renewed uneasiness, lest after all I should be compelled to pass the night away from him. Once more I bethought me of my rifle, and discharged it; but the fog lay so dense around, that the report did not go far, and I listened in vain for an answering sound. I still kept moving slowly forward, and presently the rippling sound of water caught my ear. I now fairly shouted for joy. That this was the stream on which my companions were encamped, I really believed; and if so, I had only to enter its bed, and follow it up, for a quarter of a mile, to find them.

Fifteen minutes more put me out of suspense, and filled my heart with joy; for I now beheld the light of a fire; and, sitting beside it, his elbows on his knees, his face buried in his hands, was the figure of my friend. I approached him stealthily, and placed my hand on his shoulder. He looked up with a start, and a flash of joy brightened his pale, sad features.

"Why, Roland!" he exclaimed; "my friend! you have come at last—God be praised!" and springing to his feet, he threw his arms around my neck, and wept like a child.

CHAPTER X.

OUR JOURNEY RESUMED.

"HELLO!" shouted another voice, that seemed to be half smothered; and at the same moment a dark bundle, a few feet distant, came rolling toward the fire, and the rough, ugly features of One-Eyed Sam popped out into the light. "Hello! Freshwater—that thar you?"

"It is me, Sam, thank God!"

"Thought you'd got lost, or gone under!"

"I have been lost."

"Expect! Ary deer, boy?

"No!"

"Nary once—I knowed it—chaw me! Hyer's a old nigger as'll wet on to that thar. Augh! Glad you've come, lad! Shadbones war quite down in the mouth. Better turn in and snooze it off, and talk it over to-morrow. Right smart chance of fog, and the muskeeters bite like the d—l. Augh!"

With this the head ducked into the blanket, like a turtle into its shell, and the bundle rolled back to its place, when something like a snore gave evidence that the old trapper had put off care till another day.

"Oh, my friend!" exclaimed Varney, in a tremulous voice—"how shall I express my joy at your safe return! Oh! if you only knew what I have suffered

on your account! and yet, to some extent, a selfish suffering, as I am free to admit."

"I do know, Alfred," returned I; "at least I have in imagination seen your mental anguish. But come! it is late; you have been much disturbed, and need rest; let us take Botter's advice, turn into our hammocks, and talk over the matter to-morrow."

"But you need food, Roland!"

"No! I have already eaten all I require. Are the animals safe?"

"Yes, they are all picketed close around us. Mr. Botter was kind enough to take care of ours as well as his own. But tell me—where have you been? why did you not return at the time promised? and how did you obtain food?"

"The story is too long for to-night, my friend. I have met with some remarkable adventures, but am weary; and so I pray you restrain your curiosity till to-morrow."

"I will try and do so," he said, feebly; and as he spoke, he was seized with a fit of coughing, which lasted a long time, and left him greatly exhausted.

"You should have gone into your tent before dark, and avoided this damp air!" said I, reprovingly. "If you do not take better care of yourself, I am afraid you will never see the mountains."

"My dear friend," he replied, "do not blame me! I did go into the tent and lie down; but I could not even remain there. I could not avoid thinking of you; and the more I thought, the more excited I be-

came; till at last it seemed as if I should suffocate; and I was, as it were, compelled to get up and sit by the fire. Oh! Roland, for the love of Heaven, do not leave me so again! If anything were to happen to you, I believe it would kill me. I am so feeble—so dependent—and, without you, I feel so lonely—so wretched."

He spoke in such a feeble, mournful, pleading tone, that I was affected even to tears. I took his thin, trembling hand in mine, and, in an unsteady voice, rejoined:

"Alfred Varney, unless severed by the overruling power of Divine Providence, I will not leave you again, till you are better able to bear the parting."

"Thank you, Roland! my more than brother!" he responded, with tearful eyes. "I am asking much of you, I know; I am a dead weight upon your enjoyment; I am a poor, miserable, selfish mortal—unnerved—unmanly perhaps—with the seeds of death in my system; I may never be able to repay your kindness; but I know there is a world beyond, where all will be rewarded for the good they do in this; and when the time shall come, as you know it must come, for you to go hence, your spirit will be buoyed up by the knowledge that you did all you could to render happy the last hours of a dying friend."

"Say no more, Varney!" I replied, most deeply affected; "do not talk in this desponding, melancholy strain; for you not only make me very sad, but

unfit yourself for the hard, perilous journey before you. I will do all I can for you, and feel it no sacrifice; I promised as much when I consented to be your companion; but you must, for my sake, try and look on the bright, instead of the dark, side of the picture. The mind, in your case, has much power over your disease; and if you give way to despondency, it will only hasten the doom we both seek to avert."

"I know it—I know it," he rejoined; "and I will try and be cheerful and hopeful; only do not give me the same cause for despondency which you have to-night. Roland," he continued, earnestly, after a moment's pause, during which he seemed to be lost in deep reflection—"did it ever occur to you, that when, as in my case, the spirit is partially severed from its bonds of clay, it might at times receive correct impressions concerning the unknown future? that it might, as it were, become invested with prophetic knowledge?"

"I do not know that I have ever thought upon the subject; but why do you ask?"

"You remember, when you spoke of going in quest of deer, how anxious I seemed that you should not lose sight of the camp?"

"Yes," said I; "and I felt some surprise that you should be fearful of my getting lost."

"That," returned Varney, "might have been natural to any one so dependent on another, as I acknowledge myself to be upon you—but that was the least

of my fear. I did not express all I felt then—for one does not like to subject himself to ridicule; but I will speak frankly now—for you are now prepared to say what claim I have to prophetic inspiration. If none, I shall be glad to know it was mere fancy, and not truth—for I desire not to see into a future so fraught with danger to those I love."

"Say on!" returned I, with newly awakened interest.

"Remember, Roland, you have told me nothing; and if I hit upon facts, that have transpired to your knowledge, you must at least regard it as something singular."

"I certainly shall so do," said I, "if you are even able to tell me one tithe of what has taken place since I parted from you."

"I shall make no attempt to tell you what has happened, my friend—for my impression was general, rather than particular; but I felt, and believed, your life would be in danger three several times ere I should see you again."

"Great God!" exclaimed I, with a start; "does Destiny indeed walk before us, pointing out the path which we must follow!"

"'There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
"'Rough-hew them how we will,'"

replied my friend, with deep solemnity. "How near right was I, Roland?"

"Right to the letter. I have three times narrowly

escaped death since I saw you. But had you any intimation in what manner, and by what means, my life would be menaced?"

"None."

"Did you think I would escape?"

"Twice I knew you must, else your life could not a third time be in danger—but for the third time I trembled! But tell me how it happened, Roland?"

"Not now! not now!" said I, glancing cautiously around, and dropping my voice to a whisper. "Is Stericks here?"

"Yes! he is asleep yonder, just beyond Botter," was the whispered reply.

"What time did he come in?"

"About dark."

"Did he bring any game?"

"He was loaded with deer meat, of which we made our supper."

"Did he inquire for me?"

"Not in my hearing."

"Come!" said I, aloud—"let us to bed; you forget we have a journey before us to-morrow."

We accordingly repaired to our tent, and it was my design to turn in and go to sleep at once; but my friend was so anxious to hear of my adventures, that I thought it best to gratify him; and in a very low tone I hurriedly narrated the principal facts. He was much depressed and distressed at what had occurred—but said he could not see that I was to blame in shooting Loyola, everything being taken into consid-

eration. As to the mysterious shot, he thought, like myself, that it was an attempt of Stericks to take my life; but advised me to make no mention of it to either of the trappers, and appear as if nothing had happened—though, thenceforth, to take every precaution against a secret foe, and be ever on the watch for a sinister indication.

"As regards that poor girl, Roland," he said, "much as I pity her—and pity her, I do, from my very soul—I do not think it would be wise in you to interfere. You would, in all probability, get yourself involved in a more serious difficulty, without being able to better her condition in the least."

"But my conscience would ever reprove me," returned I, "should I leave her in the hands of such a brutal monster."

"And provided you took her away from him—what would you do with her?" he inquired.

"Do with her?" said I, not a little puzzled for a rational answer; "why, take her to her friends."

"And who are her friends? and where, Roland?" he pursued. "I understand you to say, that she knows little or nothing of her early history, and is not certain that she has a friend or relative in the world."

"But I think I could find the convent where she was educated."

"And what then?"

"I think I could there learn something more of her."

"You might, and you might not; suppose the latter—what then?"

"I do not know what," said I; "but doubtless Providence would aid me in my efforts to do right."

"Pray answer me, frankly, a simple question!" continued Varney, with much earnestness. "Would you, under any circumstances, make this girl your wife?"

"Frankly, then," replied I, "I have no such design in view. I do not wish to marry at present · and if I did, she is not my ideal."

"Then, for a single moment, my dear friend, consider the whole matter in a reasonable and rational manner; and tell me, if you do not think it would be Quixotic in the extreme for you, a young man of twenty-one, to take this girl of seventeen from her father, or one who passes for her father, and set off alone with her into a strange country, for the purpose of restoring her to friends of whom she has no knowledge, and who, for all you know to the contrary, may have no existence save in your excited imagination?"

"You certainly place the matter in a very Quixotic point of view," said I, much struck with the force of his remarks.

"I certainly place the matter in its true light," he answered.

"Well, I will sleep upon it, perhaps dream upon it," said I; "and we will confer upon it to-morrow. We both need rest, after the exciting events of to-day —you especially. Good night, my friend."

"Good night, and God bless you!" he returned.

We both turned into our hammocks, without saying anything further, but neither went immediately to sleep. He coughed for an hour, and I lay awake and listened to him, my brain racked with painful and perplexing thought. At last he became quiet, and I gradually fell into a slumber, which was more or less disturbed, through the night, with strange and startling dreams. Toward morning, however, my nerves became quieted, and I became oblivious to the cares of mortality.

When I awoke, the sun was an hour above the eastern horizon, and was shining bright and clear, and gradually dispersing the mists and fog that still lay in the little valleys along the courses of the different streams. My friend was now sleeping tranquilly; and fearful of disturbing him, I crept carefully from the hammock, and stealthily left the tent.

It was indeed a day to put one in good spirits. The mists had left the elevations, and the bright sun was scattering the fog in the valley of our camp; birds fluttered and sung in the branches of the trees above us; squirrels chirruped, and leaped from limb to limb, or darted up and down the stately trunks; bees hummed their drowsy song, as they flew from one bright flower to another; the little stream purled musically, and sparkled like silver, as the light breeze now and then lifted the mist and let the rays of the sun strike it; and all nature seemed joyous and decked in her holiday attire. I felt most sensibly the

cheerfulness of the day, and resolved to show goodwill to every living thing; and had even a rattlesnake at that moment crossed my path, I should have given him a wide berth, and allowed him to pass on unharmed, unmolested.

I found the trappers squatted upon the ground, at a little distance from a dying fire, which had cooked their morning meal. They had their pipes in their mouths, and seemed to be enjoying their indolence; for One-Eyed Sam was talking glibly, and Wolfy Jake was listening, and occasionally grunting approval to his remarks. Neither seemed to take any notice of me, as I drew near, till Botter had closed his observations, with one of his peculiar laughs—when, turning to me, he said:

"Wall, Freshwater, ef snoozing can save you settlement chaps, there's no chance of your spyling. Augh!"

"So it seems," returned I, with a cheerful smile. "But you must bear in mind I had a very fatiguing day of it yesterday; and my sick friend, who is still asleep, needs all the rest he can get, after the intense anxiety and excitement he suffered on my account."

"Yes, Shadbones war raythor down in the mouth about you, that's a fact; though I knowed you'd kim out right side up, and hind-sight plum!" and he winked his one eye mischievously, and his ugly features spread out into a broad grin. "But whar was you all that time, and nary deer about?"

"I was on the look-out for game till dark," replied I; "and on my return I missed my way."

As I said this, I fixed my eyes upon Stericks, who sat quietly smoking, and looking off down the stream, taking no notice of me whatever. I thought if he were guilty of an attempt upon my life, I should perhaps detect some change, however slight, in the expression of his features. But I did not. There was not the slightest variation in color—nor the slightest twinkle, expansion, or contraction of the eye; and the eye, be it observed, will often betray the consciousness of an allusion to a secret fact, while all the rest of the countenance, by an effort of the will, may remain in an innocent repose. For some moments I looked fixedly at Stericks, in order to decide in my own mind if he held murder in his soul; but his was one of those hard, inexpressive, phlegmatic faces, that, in general, give no reflex of the owner's thought; though, on the present occasion, I fancied the harsh outlines appeared softened; and I was tempted to address him in a kindly tone, in order, if possible, to do away with that bitter animosity which must render our journey disagreeable, to say the least, so long as we should remain travelling companions. Botter glanced at me, and seemed to understand my wish—for he immediately observed, in his peculiar way:

"Come, come—what's the use, Wolfy? why can't you and Freshwater make it up, and be friends? I'd hate, most powerful, to hev anything agin anybody on sich a day as this hyer—I would—chaw me!"

"For my part," said I, "I am desirous to forget what has passed between Mr. Stericks and myself; and if he is willing, we will shake hands, and be no longer enemies."

"I don't believe in shaking hands," growled Stericks, without turning his head; "but ef you've a mind to be civil, younker, we'll say no more about it; but ef you raise the devil in me agin, I'll shoot you, by ——!"

I felt my blood tingle for a sharp retort. I was tempted to tell him that he had already tried the shooting game once and failed; and that I could do something with powder and lead, as well as himself; but, for several reasons, I restrained my temper, and replied:

"Very well—let it end so then."

"Come," said Sam, judiciously turning the conversation, "you want some feed, Freshwater; and thar's meat, and thar's fire."

"Thank you—I will help myself."

"And I say, Freshwater, I reckon you'd best stir up Shadbones; for we don't see powerful many sich days to this hyer, and we ought to make the most on 'em—yes-siree!"

"As soon as I have cooked my meat, I will call him," said I.

"Then, Wolfy, we'd best fotch in the critters, and pack our traps," he continued, turning to his companion. "Never you mind, though; you got the feed last night, and this hyer old nigger'll git the

critters ready;" and knocking the ashes from his pipe, he carefully placed it in his wampum-worked holder, and set off to drive in the horses and mules, which were feeding at no great distance.

By the time I had replenished the fire, and toasted a slice of meat, Varney made his appearance. He looked pale and exhausted, said he felt very weak, and was afraid he would not be able to make a long day's journey. He had some appetite, however, which I considered a favorable sign; and, after partaking of our somewhat primitive meal, said he felt stronger.

As the morning was wearing away, and I knew the trappers were anxious to be on the move, I hastened to catch our animals, saddle our horses, fold our tent, and pack the mule; and in less than half an hour from Varney's appearance, we were once more mounted, and had bidden a long, an eternal, adieu to Camp Calyptra.

We regained the Santa Fe trail, and, in the course of another half hour, rode directly through the now deserted camp of the Santa Fe traders. I did not pass the ground without experiencing some very strange and peculiar sensations; and as I pointed out the spot to Varney, he slightly shuddered, and said:

"I thank God, Roland, you did not kill him!"

"I pray God he may not die!" returned I.

"And what of the girl, my friend?" he continued. "Are you still resolved on your Quixotic adventure? or have you thought better of it?"

"I should like to see her again—I must see her again, Alfred—but, further than that, I am not prepared to say."

"And are you really resolved on seeing her again, Roland?"

"I am."

"But how will you accomplish your wish?"

"We must overtake them."

"I fear it will be impossible, my friend, unless they travel very slowly, or my health so improves as to make long daily journeys."

"I think we shall travel faster than they, and they have only very little the start," I replied.

"Well, to gratify you, Roland, I will exert myself to the utmost of my strength," said Varney, with a troubled countenance.

"You shall do no such thing, and I beg you to give yourself no uneasiness! It is a long journey to Santa Fe; and if we do not overtake the party in question for a week or two, it will make no material difference. I wish to see Adele again, and have a further talk with her; I wish to learn the result of the wound of Loyola; but I am in no haste: therefore cast the matter from your mind."

The country we travelled over on the second day, was of the same general character as that of the day preceding—rolling prairie, green with grass, and gay with bright flowers—steep bluffs, winsome valleys, and wooded streams. Much of the soil was rich, but only a little of it was under cultivation. Here and

there, at long intervals, were the log-cabins of Indian farmers—for, by treaty, no whites were allowed to settle here; but the different tribes, who owned the land, in general preferred hunting and fishing to the labor of cultivating more than an occasional corn-patch and a patch for vegetables. They lived mostly in moving villages—that is to say, villages of tents, which they could strike in the morning, transport through the day, and pitch at night, with very little trouble. Their territory was large for their numbers, and their wealth lay mostly in horses, mules and cattle, which cost them little labor to raise, and which found ready sale, at fair prices, with their eastern white neighbors.

On our journey to-day we met a party of some half a dozen, going to Independence with a small drove of horses. They were superbly mounted, and were dressed to Indian fancy—being bedecked with feathers and wampum, and bedaubed with paint; and they had bows, and quivers of arrows, and rifles, and lassos, the latter coiled and hung upon the horns of their Mexican saddles. They were friendly, of course, though looking very fierce; and being real, native Indians, of whom I had heard and read so much—and being, moreover, more Indianfied than anything I had seen at Independence—I could not resist the temptation of stopping one, on pretence of wishing to know the price of a good horse. I was at first inclined to be very romantic, and to fancy myself my great-great-grandfather, or some other worthy pioneer-

leader, on the point of making a very important treaty with a bold, daring, cruel, pale-face-hating Indian chief; but the moment he opened his mouth, and assured me "his hoss was good a heap," I began to feel quite common-place; and when he wound up by telling me "he liked good whisk to make drunk come," and asked for a "chaw tobac," I thought him akin to a very vulgar human importation from Holland, and could scarcely conceal my disgust. So we parted—neither particularly pleased—he no richer, but I some wiser. Shade of Cooper! had this red man the cunning of the fox, the fierceness of the tiger, the nobility of the lion? No! rather say the slouching vulgarity of the hound! And this is the half-civilized Indian of the nineteenth century!

My friend proved not so well able to bear the fatigues of the second day as the first; and by the middle of the afternoon we encamped for the night. During the night his cough became more troublesome than usual; and he had a slight hæmorrhage of the lungs, which quite alarmed me. The next day he was still weaker; and we both began to despair of his ever seeing the mountains; but from that time he gradually began to amend, and hope revived.

For several days, which I pass over with a word, we were not in our saddles over four or five hours of the twenty-four, and then we travelled very slowly.

This was a standing cause for grumbling on the part of Stericks; and even Botter himself, I fancied, began to get tired of his bargain—though he had, as

yet, made no direct complaint. I had once or twice heard of the Santa Fe traders, from parties we had met—but could learn nothing of Loyola or his daughter. According to report, the company was now many leagues ahead of us; and I began to lose all hope of overtaking them before they should reach the point where our course would require us to diverge from the grand trail.

During all this time, the weather had proved remarkably fine; and our route, each day, had been over the same delightful, picturesque country already described; but we were now approaching the borders of these rolling and partially timbered lands; and were about to enter upon the grand prairies—upon scenes of more exciting and thrilling adventure—upon scenes of hardship and peril—compared to which, all I had seen and experienced would sink into insignificance. Oh! the eventful future which lay before me! Could I have lifted the vail, which, by Almighty wisdom, shut it from my view, I should perhaps have turned back with trembling and fear. But the beacon of hope seemed to beam brightly in the distance; and I pressed onward, perceiving not its *ignis fatuus* illusions, nor the quicksands of despair which lay between me and my goal!

CHAPTER XI.

STARTLING NEWS.

THE breeze was blowing softly from the south, a few fleecy clouds were floating through the blue of heaven, and the bright, genial sun was some three hours advanced on his western decline, when we reached that little Paradise of the West known as Council Grove. On our journey hither, I had seen many beautiful places and scenes—but none to equal this. A grove of stately trees, their trunks standing like huge columns to support the green Gothic canopy above, formed a broad belt to the right and left of a clear running stream, which purled through a gently sloping valley, whose emerald hue was variegated with thousands of bright flowers. All the sylvan charms of the temperate zone were here in lavish profusion. Giant trees of oak, beech, hickory, elm, ash, maple and walnut, here seemed vieing for superiority, yet with harmonious rivalry, and locking their huge arms in fraternal embrace. Bees hummed their drowsy songs, as they flew from one bright flower to another—sometimes seeming to dispute possession with gay-colored butterflies—while thousands of grasshoppers went bounding from blade to blade, and the innocent cricket chirped his music beneath them all. Above us, sleek, bright-eyed squirrels went leaping

from limb to limb, combining cunning, coyness, and boldness in their every movement; and while hundreds of showy-plumed aerial voyagers fluttered among the green leaves, the well-known mocking-bird, cat-bird, and blue-jay, made the air vocal with their melodies.

"Roland," exclaimed Varney, as we rode under the green arches, "is this the Garden of Eden?"

"The Garden of Eden could scarcely have been more beautiful and enchanting," I replied.

"This hyer's one of the spots!" observed One-Eyed Sam; "and this hyer old nigger says it, as has seed some punks in his time. Augh! But we've been a long time gitting here," he added, with some hesitation; "and though I hate to tell you so, Wolfy's got opinionated that we'd best quit to this hyer."

"Indeed!" returned I, in a tone of surprise; "and do you wish to be released from your bargain?"

"Wait till we camp," was the reply, "and then I'll tell you some'at."

We pitched our camp in one of the shadiest nooks of this sylvan retreat; and then, for the first time, I discovered we were not the only human tenants of the grove. On the opposite side of the stream, some distance below us, was a small moving village of Peorias; and near it, the camp of a party of white traders from Missouri. I pointed them out to Botter, who said, in reply:

"Sartin, Freshwater—I knowed thar'd be white and red humans hyer, so as you could take your pick,

ef you didn't go no furder with me and Wolfy—fur this hyer's a grand stamping ground to all the friendly red niggers, and them as wants to trade with 'em; and I've seed 'em here as thick as fleas to a dog's back—ef I haven't, chaw me! Augh!"

"Then you are really in earnest about separating from us?" inquired I.

"Why, hoss, I don't like it, and I'd like to take you considerable; but Shadbones keeps us back like a sick muley, and Wolfy growls like the d—l, and so what's a old one-eyed nigger to do except to gin in?"

"Well," said I, "I don't know as I can blame you; for when we made our bargain with you, I supposed, of course, we should be able to travel much faster than we have done between here and Independence."

"Yes," returned Botter; "and don't forgit we've had jam up weather, and been tramping through a peaceable country; but now we're agwine to leave all them thar behind; and what 'ud Shadbones do with his tent tore up into lariats, all heaven kiming down to water, and a hundred screeching devils arter his top-knot? You kin gamble high on to it, Freshwater, that ef he don't jine some big party with wagons, he'll never take his ha'r to Bent's."

"But can we find such a party going directly to Bent's."

"Expect—leastways, thar's al'ays some as is gwine out about this time."

"Very well, I will have a talk with my friend, and see what can be done."

This conversation occurred while Botter and myself were unsaddling and unpacking our animals; and as soon as I had hoppled and picketed ours, I informed Varney what had passed between us.

"Well, Roland, he is right," he said, in a low, sad tone. "I have myself been thinking I might never get through on horseback, and Stericks' impatience and surliness is a great source of annoyance. We will pay them for their time, and let them go; and if I can find no means for getting on, I can die here. It is at least a consolation to think my body will take its last rest in the most beautiful spot I have ever seen."

"Come! come!" returned I; "do not talk of dying here, or elsewhere! During the last three or four days, your health has improved, and you only need good spirits to make you still better. Let us take a walk through this grove, and visit our neighbors."

"Have you given up all thoughts of overtaking Adele?" inquired Varney, as, arm-in-arm, we sauntered down the flowery bank of the limpid stream.

"I should, if I have not—for doubtless the traders are fifty miles ahead of us."

"And are you contented to let her go?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because it is my duty to study your pleasure and happiness, as well as you mine; and as we cannot longer travel together in the company of the trappers, perhaps you had better leave me here and go on with them yourself."

"Leave you here—alone?"

"No, not alone. I think I can make friends with my countrymen here—or at least with the Indians; and in their camp, and under their protection, I can remain till I find an opportunity of prosecuting my journey with a large company of wagoners. I am delighted with the place—I feel the need of rest—and so I think I shall pass a few days very agreeably here."

"And for what purpose shall I go forward?" mused I.

"That you best know yourself, Roland?"

"True, I did promise Adele I would see her again soon; and, I frankly admit, it would give me pleasure to keep my word; but that pleasure would be heightened to have you in my company."

"But you see that cannot be, Roland. I can only travel a few miles a day on horseback, under the most favorable circumstances; and the most favorable circumstances, so far, we have had. What would become of me, should I see the reality of the picture which Botter has drawn? And, moreover, you could go on to Bent's Fort, and there await me; and there, you know, we were to separate, according to your original plan of returning home in the fall; so that the parting must come soon or late, and the only difference between now and then is time."

"You grow philosophical," said I, "and seem anxious to get rid of me."

"Roland Rivers!" exclaimed Varney, stopping sud-

denly, and facing me, with a sad, reproachful look, that touched my heart—"what have I ever done to deserve such words from you?" and his voice trembled, and his dark eyes filled with tears.

"Forgive me, my friend!" said I, grasping his thin hand. "I was hasty; I did not think before I spoke; but I was surprised to hear you speak so coolly of separation, when all along I had been led to suppose it would be painful to you as well as myself."

"If you could look into my heart this minute, Roland, and behold the anguish it has cost me to make this proposition, you would not reproach me with making it coolly, and without pain."

"Why then have you made it at this time of all others?"

"Roland, I have watched you closely for the last few days, and have thus been made aware how much your mind dwells upon that poor girl. Ah! you start—you are surprised; but you must know that, to me, the face of a friend is a glass, in which I see the heart mirrored; and to read your heart, in so good a glass as your face, were an easy task, even to a novice. I know you have sought to conceal from me the fact of your mind being occupied with what you fancied would give me pain to learn—but which I have learned, nevertheless—and had it not been that I indulged the hope of being able to make such progress as would accomplish your desire, I should have spoken to you on the subject ere this. Thus you perceive why I have chosen the present time, of

all others, to make my proposition—it now being rendered certain that I cannot go forward with the rapidity required—and I would not have you disappointed for the world."

"But, Varney, much as I would like to see Adele, and learn the fate of Loyola, I cannot bear to think of leaving you here—it seems like deserting a friend."

"It is not so in truth," replied Varney; "though I shall be selfish enough to exact a promise, that you will either return on the trail and meet me, or go forward to Bent's and await my arrival—for not to behold you again, would render me miserable indeed."

"But can you find a safe conveyance to the fort, do you think?"

"We will inquire; and here we are at the traders' camp. How shall we cross the stream? I would avoid wetting my feet."

"Let me show you;" and lifting him in my arms, as if he had been a child, I quickly landed him on the opposite bank—for the stream was neither wide nor deep.

We here found a few traders from Missouri, and a small village of Peorias—the "big village," as it was termed, being out on the plains. The Indians here were not painted, and really appeared quite civilized—many of them being clothed in garments purchased from the whites, and several of them being able to converse in the English language with ease and fluency. The males, some of them, were fine, athletic-looking fellows; and a few of the women had in-

teresting and intelligent, though not remarkably handsome, features. There were about thirty in all—men, women, and children; and though most of them were rather flashily ornamented with gold and silver rings, brooches, red scarfs, red blankets, beads, wampum, and so forth, I saw not one of decidedly repulsive appearance. Their tents were pitched in a semi-circle, fronting on the stream, and looked comfortable and tidy; and their cattle were grazing in the vicinity, tended by half-grown boys.

The traders, about a dozen in number, were awaiting customers from the plains—Council Grove being the grand rendezvous of all the friendly tribes. They dealt in guns, knives, pistols, trinkets, gew-gaws, cloths, blankets, powder, lead, whiskey, tobacco, sugar, coffee, and so on; and bartered their commodities for furs, skins, horses, cattle, and such articles of Indian manufacture as would find ready market in the States. Their wagons were so disposed as to form a hollow square; and they displayed their articles in a long, temporary booth, each trader having his allotted place or stall. At present they were doing no business; and while three or four were lounging about, smoking their pipes, and talking over their affairs, the others were playing cards and pitching quoits.

To our inquiries concerning a party for Bent's Fort, we were answered, that it was supposed a small train of wagons would be shortly going out, but at what precise time no one could say. Varney asked for the privilege of being allowed to pitch his tent in their

camp, and was told that he would be welcome to do so; and further, that he could mess with them, by paying his share of the expense—a proposition which he accepted with pleasure.

"You seem determined to so arrange your affairs that I shall have no excuse for remaining with you," I observed to him.

"I know enough of the human heart, to be almost certain that you will not rest contented till you have redeemed your promise to Adele," he replied.

"Well," I rejoined "I will talk with Botter before I decide—though I have no great inclination to travel further with his surly companion."

We were just on the point of leaving the traders' camp, and recrossing the stream to our own, when we heard the tramp of horses' feet; and immediately after, four men, in the usual hunting costume of the West, rode up to the wagons and dismounted—their fine, noble animals, covered with sweat and dust, fairly drooping their heads with fatigue, showing that they had been ridden fast and far. The riders themselves, all comparatively young men, and fine, athletic fellows, looked weary and anxious—so that it was evident, from a single glance, that something had gone wrong.

"You're back soon, Mr. Sutton," said one of the traders, addressing one of the new-comers—a tall, handsomely-formed individual, with black hair, eyes, and beard, and whose age could not be far from thirty. "Anything the matter?"

"Yes!" replied Mr. Sutton, in a positive tone, with compressed lips; "the Indians are out in great numbers, and several whites have been killed. You perceive that two of our own party are missing!"

Instantly the parties playing cards and pitching quoits, left their games, and gathered around the speaker and his companions, to hear the news. Varney and myself also hurried up to the group.

"Let's hear all about it!" said the one who first addressed Sutton.

"The story is soon told," pursued Sutton. "We were out on the plains, having some rare sport with the buffaloes, in the vicinity of the Plum Buttes, when we were suddenly set upon by a large party of Arrapahoes. As our numbers were too few to cope with them, we fled, in a southeast direction, aiming to strike the Santa Fe trail. The Indians followed us for a few miles, and then apparently gave up the pursuit. As it was near night, we selected a pleasant spot, and camped, keeping a sharp look-out till daylight, when we were astonished to perceive the same party not more than a mile distant. They had probably been searching for us through the night, for they immediately bore down toward us, and we made a narrow escape, having barely time to saddle and mount our beasts before they were upon our camp. We left our tents, blankets, and camp utensils, which they stopped to seize and divide, and this diversion in our favor probably saved our lives. Determined this time to put a safe distance between them and us,

we continued our course eastward, and toward evening reached Turkey Creek, where we found a company of Santa Fe traders encamped on the western bank of the stream. We joined them, and told them our story. Some looked grave; but a few of the young men received the intelligence lightly enough, and seemed to think we had been unnecessarily scared. They said if we had stood our ground, doubtless the Indians would have fled, as they do not like to face the unerring rifles of the whites."

"That's a fact," said the Missourian; "you see you haint got seasoned out here yet!"

"Suppose you reserve your opinion, sir, till you hear my story through!" rejoined Sutton, a little testily. "When I have finished, you will be better able to judge whether the Indians *proved* themselves arrant cowards or not."

"Oh, sartin," returned the other, a little crestfallen. "Go ahead!"

"I do not think," proceeded Sutton, with a touch of irony, "I am more cowardly than people in general; but as my companions and myself came out here for a pleasure hunt, we were not in a proper condition to see the propriety of recklessly throwing our lives away, when caution and prudence could save them. Well, as I have said, some of the younger members of the party in question, made rather light of our story, and none seemed to be apprehensive of their camp being attacked, though they took the precaution to post sentinels. But it was attacked, neverthe-

less—probably by the same large party of Arrapahoes, who fought like devils. We did not fly this time, sir! but made as good a defence as we could. Several of the Indians were killed; but, alas! that I must add, several of the whites also, among whom were two of our comrades. After a desperate fight of more than an hour, our enemies retreated, bearing away their dead, driving away several of the animals, and taking with them two female prisoners."

"Shocking!" exclaimed several voices.

"Was there a wounded man in that camp when you joined it?" inquired I, eagerly.

"There was, sir—a Mexican, or Spaniard, I believe—but he was killed at the first onset, and his daughter was one of the two taken prisoners."

"Good God! Adele a prisoner!" exclaimed I, in a tone that drew the attention of the whole group upon me.

"Yes," said Sutton, "that was the name—I remember hearing it mentioned with commiseration after the fight was over."

"When did this occur?"

"Last night."

"You don't say you've come from Turkey Creek since last night?" said one of the traders, in a tone of surprise.

"Yes, since daylight this morning."

"Then you've eyther killed your hosses—or, dern me, they're some punks!" cried another.

"They are the true mettle, or we should never

have escaped those cursed savages," replied Sutton. "But they need rest and food now; and as we are almost worn out with our long ride, I will stand treat for the whole, if any of you will unharness and hopple them."

Three or four of the party instantly took charge of the weary animals, and I inquired the distance to Turkey Creek.

"Wall, stranger, it's seventy mile, or tharabouts," was the answer; "leastways, we put it down for two jam-up days' journey."

"Will you permit me a few minutes' private conversation with you?" I said, addressing one of Sutton's companions—a light-haired, blue-eyed, good-looking young man, of perhaps twenty-five years of age.

"Certainly," he replied, in a courteous tone; and we immediately withdrew from the crowd.

"As I know several of the company which was attacked," I began, "and take a deep interest in the fate of the poor girl—who, as your companion says, was taken prisoner—I shall be much obliged to you for some particulars of the tragic affair. Are you sure the girl was not killed?"

"I am not sure," he answered; "but after the fight, it was discovered that she and another female were missing, and it is supposed that the Indians took them away alive."

"Are you sure that her father was killed?"

"If you mean the wounded man, I am sure, for I saw him dead."

"Do you happen to know if his wound was considered dangerous at the time of the attack?"

"No, sir! of that I know nothing."

"And how many of the whites were killed?"

"Seven in all, including two of our party—but several others were wounded."

"Was there any talk of following the Indians, in order to rescue the captives?"

"I heard one or two suggestions of that kind—but others said it would be the height of rashness and folly—so I think none will make the attempt."

"And what will the Indians do with these female prisoners?"

"Make wives and slaves of them, I suppose."

"Great Heaven!" cried I—"that must not be! they must be rescued!"

"More easily said than done, my dear sir!" replied the other. "These Indians are said to be among the most formidable of the Western tribes; and it would be sheer fool-hardiness to attack them in their own country, without having a large force of experienced Indian fighters."

"But might these females not be rescued by stealth or stratagem?"

"I cannot say, sir! but I think such things seldom happen except in novels."

"Is it your intention to return to the prairies?"

"No, sir! it is my intention to return to the States,

and there remain. A party of six of us came out for a pleasure hunt, and we have had enough of it. Two of our friends take their last sleep on the banks of Turkey Creek, and the rest of us are going home, sadder and wiser than when we came hither."

"It is curious," observed Varney, reflectively—"you return to the States to prolong your life, and I seek the wilderness for the same object."

"You go to regain your health?" inquired the other.

"I do."

"Well, you may do that, and lose your scalp. As for me, I think I should rather die among my friends, in a civilized country, than live out here in constant dread and terror."

After some further conversation, we returned to our own camp.

"Well," inquired Varney, "what now, Roland?"

"That girl must be rescued, Alfred!"

"But how?"

"I do not know—I must have a talk with Botter."

"But surely, Roland, you will not be so venturesome as to set off in quest of her?"

"And must she remain among them forever, poor girl?"

"It is a hard fate," sighed Varney, "and I appreciate your humane and noble feelings; but if you attempt to rescue her, you will only lose your own life, and she remain a prisoner still."

"I might, and I might not—God only knows."

"You are resolved on the venture then, Roland?"

"I will first consult Botter, and take his advice; and, apropos, here he is."

"Pray Heaven he discourage him!" said Varney, in a tone not intended for my ear—though I heard the words, and the deep sigh which followed.

CHAPTER XII.

ON THE GRAND PRAIRIES.

I IMMEDIATELY made Botter acquainted with all I had heard from the amateur hunters.

"Wall, them thar Injuns al'ays was the devil's own," he said in reply; "and hyer's a old nigger as has seed 'em within short smell—ef I haven't, you kin chaw me up fur a liar. Augh! But they must hev got cantankerous arter them green spoonies, to make sich a dash so fur east as Turkey Creek; they'd looked a —— sight more like themselves—the infernal, greasy scoundrels—howling around to Pawnee Fork; that's whar they ginerally spread out to do thar dirty work."

"So Pawnee Fork is considered the most dangerous point on the route, is it?" said I.

"Raythe—though nobody's top-knot is parfectly safe from thar to Bent's—but I'd not expected them to Turkey Creek. Chaw me up fur a liar, Fresh-

water, but this hyer old one-eyed corn-cracker would jest like to been thar—fur I jest feel myself spyling fur a fight—eh! Wolfy?"

Stericks was squatted on the ground, within hearing, and replied, in his usual growling tone:

"Better keep cl'ar of them thar 'Rappahoes—that's my notion, and I knows 'em a few."

"Wall, you does, old hoss!" laughed Botter. "D'ye remember the time, Wolfy, we both went in, plum-centre, rubbed three on 'em out, and lifted thar ha'r?"

"And how I toted you off, with two or three arrers sticking into ye? Yes, I haint forgot to that."

"Augh! them was times!" said Sam, with a satisfactory grunt.

"Suppose I pay you well for your time, how would you like to go with me in search of these female prisoners?" inquired I.

"Go whar, Freshwater?"

"Why into the Indian country."

"Arter them thar womens?"

"Yes."

Botter looked at me, with a quizzical leer, as he inquired:

"In 'arnest, Freshwater?"

"Certainly I am."

"What! you jest want to run your wool into them —— red niggers' fists, fur two womens?"

"You think, then, there would be no chance of our return, should we make the attempt?"

"Nary once—not any more nor ef you was sunk

two foot below wolf-smell! What! go dodging to them thar niggers, to thar own stamping-ground, and expect to keep your ha'r?—that's one of the notions—chaw me!"

"From what you have just said, I inferred you had done as much already."

"Nary once, boy—nary once—not so green sence I cut my eye-teeth. About fifteen of the —— imps once pitched into me and Wolfy, and we went in and drawed blood; but that thar wasn't walking into the whole nation, in thar own country, by a long shot. Augh!"

"Alas! poor Adele!" sighed I.

"Poor what?"

"One of the females captured was a young girl, a particular friend of mine," said I, by way of explanation, for I had never told either of the trappers of my adventure in the traders' camp.

"Oh, she was, hey?" returned Botter; "that's the reason fur you wanting to go, hey? Expect! Glad you told me that thar, Freshwater."

"Why?"

"Bekase your wanting to tramp arter two strange womens, right into the devil's own camp, made me suspicion your whole senses had gone a wolfing. Being your friend, Freshwater, I'm sorry fur the gal; but ef them thar 'Rappahoes has got her, thar's no help for't—she'd better been dead fust."

It is impossible to describe my feelings, when I found there was no hope of my ever beholding Adele

again. It was as if one bright joy had been for ever removed from the sum total of life. Now, for the first time, I realized how strong was that attachment which I had termed friendship. Was it mere friendship? or was it love? I began to doubt if I properly knew my own heart—but time, I knew, would show.

"You see," said I, sadly, turning to Varney, "I have no object in hurrying forward now, and so I will remain with you."

He grasped my hand, and tears filled his eyes.

"You give me new life, my dear friend," he replied. "I should be miserable without you—though, for your happiness, I feigned a willingness to make the sacrifice."

"Poor Adele!" I sighed.

"Roland, you love her," he whispered, "and I pity you."

"She was good and beautiful, Alfred; and since I have lost her, I feel that one bright hope has been struck from existence. Is that love, Varney?"

"It is akin to it, at least," he said; and as he spoke, he cast his eyes upward, with an air of abstraction, and sighed.

"You are thinking of her you love?" said I.

"Yes, Roland, I am thinking of my sweet Mary—shall I ever behold her again?"

"You have hope," said I.

"Else would life be valueless," he rejoined. "I am thinking, that were she lost to me forever, as perhaps Adele is to you, not only one bright hope, but all

hopes, ends and aims would be struck from my existence, which would then be a blank indeed."

"Yours is certainly true love," said I; "but I cannot say I have the same feelings; though, Heaven knows, just now I feel quite wretched. Little did I think, when I parted from that poor girl, in whom I took so deep an interest, that such a horrible fate awaited her, and that I should never behold her again. Better, far better for her, had the ball, which I lodged in Loyola's breast, been sent to her heart; for I am sure her gentle spirit would have found its way to Paradise, and thus she would have escaped an earthly doom which makes me shudder to contemplate. And Loyola is dead! How much had I to do in shortening his days? Ah! the whole subject is painful—let me not dwell upon it. Come, Varney, since we are to travel no further in the company of the trappers, let us settle with them, and talk over other plans—it will at least be a temporary relief to my mind. If it were not for you, my friend, I would turn back, and make glad the hearts of my parents. Oh! Varney, just now I am very, very wretched."

"I perceive you are," rejoined Varney, in a tone of deep feeling; "and as I love you, my friend, I must counsel you for the best. Do not make further sacrifice for me; but if you feel you are doing wrong, in going forward on this perilous journey, return at once to those who have more claim upon you than I. I shall always feel grateful for the kindness you have shown to one who may never be able to repay you;

but much as I prize your companionship, I would not, for the world, that on my account you should do that which will cause you future regret."

"Say no more!" I replied—"I am going with you. You have succeeded, during our brief acquaintance, in twining yourself about my heart; and come what come may, a friend in your extremity I will not desert."

"Thank you, and may God reward you!" said Varney, in a tremulous tone; and he turned his head away to conceal his emotion.

Botter at first declined taking any pay for the time he had lost in traveling to suit our convenience. He said that as he was the first to break the bargain, he was willing to consider the matter square; and that we had a better right to complain of our disappointment than to pay for it. But I insisted on remunerating him, because his time was valuable, and he had really been very kind and obliging, which was not to be offset by the disagreeable churlishness of his partner.

"Wall," he said at last, with a mischievous grin, and twinkle of his dark eye, "I reckon, Freshwater, you sort o' does owe this hyer old beaver a wet to Bent's, fur not fotching in ary deer—to say nothing to hitting a tree to a hundred yard—eh! boy?"

"I certainly do, Sam; and as you were to call up all your friends, you know, I am sure twenty-five dollars will not be too large an appropriation for that

interesting occasion, at which I had hoped to be present."

"Chaw me, boy, but I wish you was gwine to be thar—fur this hyer old hoss likes you jam up; but them thar twenty-five shiners is too much—bekase, ef me and Wolfy's got to wet 'em out, there'll be two —— lazy, drunken loafers fur a week. Eh! Wolfy, coon?"

"Oh, take the money, without no sich —— palaver!" growled Stericks. "We've 'arned it, by the hardest work I ever done to my life."

"Then s'pose you take it, and shut your ugly meat-trap!" cried Botter, indignantly. And as I put the specie into his hand, he gave it an angry toss to his partner—muttering, in an undertone: "Some two-legged critters is more hog nor human—ef they ain't, why war decency diskivered? Augh!"

Saying this, he turned short about, and walked away—but soon came back, and called me aside.

"Freshwater," he said, "you musn't take me fur Wolfy, nor Wolfy for One-Eyed Sam, when you kim to think over your fust tramp. He's got some good streaks, has Wolfy—and this hyer old nigger's got some —— bad ones—and so, not being jest alike, I want you to keep me and him from gitting mixed up like to your thinking noddle."

"I certainly shall do that, without the least difficulty," I replied. "I shall always remember you as one it would give me pleasure to meet again, either in

the settlements or in the wilderness—but your companion——"

"Wall, thar, Freshwater, s'pose you quit to the good word, and leave Wolfy go—fur I sees a sign in your eye, that you'll say some'at as I wouldn't like to hear, being his friend like, ye see."

"Botter," said I, grasping his hard, horny, weather-stained hand, "would to Heaven there were more like you in the world!"

"What! more sich chawed-up, slashed-up, nose-bitten, cheek-bored, one-eyed old niggers like to me, hey?"

"Even so—if, under their rough exteriors, a heart could be found like yours."

"Wall, you won't find nary sich chopped-up human agin—you kin gamble on to that," returned the old trapper. "As to the heart, Freshwater, I reckon the less said about that thar ar' the best. I knows I've got some decent feelings—but the devil gits into me at times, and then I mought be prayed for a heap. Augh!"

We spent the night in our tent, in the trappers' camp; and the next morning, at an early hour, I took leave of Botter, who expressed the hope that we should meet again. I saw him mount his horse and depart, with feelings of regret; for I had got accustomed to his ways—and, rough and uneducated as he was, I liked him.

The new day, like those which had preceded it, was bright and beautiful. The sun rose golden in the east,

and the birds, squirrels and insects surrounded us with happy life, and filled the air with happy songs. Varney, too, made his appearance in good spirits, and seemed stronger and more animated than at any time since our acquaintance; and this had a revivifying effect upon me, who might otherwise have been quite despondent. What with dividing my thoughts, strange as it may seem, between poor Adele and my parents, I had slept but little through the night; and had my friend risen gloomy and dispirited, and the morning been cloudy and unpropitious, I do believe I should have been tempted, in spite of my resolution to the contrary, to turn my steps homeward—so much are we, impressible beings the best of us, affected internally by external surroundings.

'Ah!" said Varney, cheerfully, with an animated glow, as his eye wandered around the grove—"this seems like living indeed! So, the trappers are gone? Well, I am not sorry. I liked Botter; but his surly companion constantly impressed me with dread—a kind of indefinite fear—and I am glad to be relieved of his presence."

"Come," said I, "let us go down to the traders' camp, get another civilized meal, and see if we can gather any interesting news."

Not to enter too much into detail of that which can be of no special interest to the reader, I will merely remark, that we remained two days at Council Grove; when, to our great delight, a military company, having in charge a small train of wagons, passed through the

place, on their way from Fort Leavenworth to Bent's Fort. The commander of the company, whom I will term Lieutenant Parker, being a very gentlemanly and obliging individual, we had no difficulty in making suitable arrangements to go out with him. We took our animals, tent, and all our camp materials along; and Varney had the privilege of riding on horseback, and in one of the wagons, and changing from one to the other as often as suited his pleasure, while the lieutenant took care that we both fared as well as himself.

We now journeyed much faster than before; and there being some fifty of us in all, we felt perfectly safe from Indian molestation; and had the weather proved fine, we should have had a few days of agreeable traveling; but during the afternoon of the first day, it set in to rain—and continued, with very little intermission, for three or four days—swelling all the streams on our route, making the road in many places muddy and miry, and causing the horses and mules to chafe under the saddle and in the harness.

Varney, much to my relief of mind, did not appear to suffer from the unpleasant change of weather; but he took care not to expose himself needlessly, and to keep himself as dry as possible, under cover of the wagon, in which he now rode altogether, (letting his horse follow,) and which at night served him for a tent.

Our first military camp was at Diamond Spring,

about twenty miles from Council Grove. This is a spring of clear, cold water, some three or four feet across, and is a noted stopping-place for caravans, either going out or coming in. The second day we started early, and pushed rapidly forward, through the constantly falling rain, and camped, just before dark, on Cottonwood Fork, a distance of some thirty miles from Diamond Spring. The third day—I date, of course, from the time of our joining the company—we found our animals so chafed and fatigued, that we made only a short march, and encamped, about noon, on Turkey Creek.

This was the spot to excite in me the most painful emotions; for here it was the fight had occurred, in which Loyola had met his death, and Adele been taken prisoner. I looked around, with a sad heart, and shuddered to think upon the awful fate of the poor girl, who might never know the blessings of happiness in her weary journey through life. Her early years had been passed in what might well be termed misery—but these, in comparison with her present doom, might seem as sunny hours to a long night of tempest. And would her present night of wretchedness ever have a morn in life? or was it her hard destiny to groan on, in desolate wo, till her bright spirit should float to its heavenly home beyond the dark river of death? Was there no hope for her? was there no friendly hand to be stretched to her relief? Should I, who had vowed to protect her, go quietly on my way, and allow her to suffer?

Was I always to think of her as one doomed to a hopeless slavery, among a race of savages, and make no attempt to save her? No! my soul revolted at the thought; and should nothing intervene in her favor, I solemnly resolved, soon or late, to make one attempt to rescue her—even if compelled to go alone, and unaided, into the very jaws, as it were, of a most horrible death.

But it was not my intention to pursue a rash or perilous course, if I could avoid it. I was resolved that Adele, if living a prisoner among the Indians, should be restored to civilized life; I was resolved, should all other means fail, to do for her all that one man could do, ere I turned my face homeward; but I had no romantic ideas of performing wonderful feats, like the knights of old, merely to display my heroism and devotion. I would not rush into peril for peril's sake—nor was I particularly desirous that she should owe her liberty to me more than another. My prime object was her restoration to civilization: the means and manner of her deliverance, and by whom performed, were of secondary importance.

I had strong hopes, too, this might be effected without my personal assistance—for I had laid the whole matter before Lieutenant Parker, and he had promised to report to his superior officer, and thought it not unlikely a force might be sent against the tribe in question, to chastise them for their presumption, and snatch their ill-fated victims from their remorseless grasp. But besides all this, my first duty was to

remain with my sick companion; and I was now determined not to part from him till there should come a change, either for better or worse—till, in fact, I could leave him on the road to health, or know his spirit had passed the portals of death.

We were now, it could be said, fairly upon the margin of the Grand Prairies. The rolling and partially-timbered lands, had gradually given place to the flat and arid-looking plains, that stretch away, northward and westward, for hundreds of miles—to the very base, in fact, of that grand, rocky chain which divides the rivers of the Atlantic from the Pacific. No longer were our eyes to be greeted with the tall green blade and bright flowers; but, in place, we were to have the short, brown buffalo grass, thinly planted, and looking withered by contrast—though really sweeter and more nutritious, I was told, than the ranker and more beautiful vegetation. No longer were we to be delighted with stately groves, along the banks of purling streams, with gay birds singing in their green branches, and blithe squirrels hopping from limb to limb, and darting up and down their stately trunks; but, in place, we were to have deep, sunken, muddy, sluggish creeks, and a dull, monotonous view, unrelieved by a single tree, shrub, or bush. Turkey Creek was entirely bare of timber; and it was only with great labor, and a search far and wide, that sufficient fuel could be collected for culinary purposes.

But as a compensation, if I may so term it, for

the beauties of the country left behind us, we were now entering upon the Paradise of hunters, the grand buffalo range, where these formidable-looking animals may be seen in droves of millions, covering the earth for miles on miles beyond the reach of sight. As yet we had seen none of the living; but here and there were old wallows—that is, places where the animal, lying on its side, as its wont, and using its feet to turn itself round and round, has formed a cavity in the yielding soil—here and there, I say, were old wallows, and grinning skulls, and decaying bones, showing that once their range had been here and eastward, and giving us an inkling of what we might shortly expect to behold.

Toward evening the rain ceased; but the air becoming sultry and oppressive, I resolved to sleep on the ground under cover of my tent. I chose the ground there, because of its being drier, while I could have all the advantage of a chance breeze, as my canvas covering did not reach quite to the earth. Soon after dark, I picketed my animals, and, being very tired, threw off my clothes and laid down on one of my blankets, with the other at hand to cover me in case of a sudden change of temperature during the night. For some time I laid awake, troubled with painful thoughts; but gradually my senses sunk into a doze; and, soon after, a deep, dreamless sleep succeeded.

About midnight I was awakened by a stunning clap of thunder. I was lying on my back, uncovered, and

felt chilly—for the rain was beating furiously against my tent, and quite a puddle of water had begun to form against my side—but as I attempted to rise, there came another vivid flash of lightning—and, horror of horrors! by its searching light I beheld an enormous rattlesnake nestled close to my feet. My movement had aroused him, so that I saw his arched neck and fiery eyes; and, almost at the same instant, he gave his warning signal, and struck. I felt the blow against my foot; and not doubting that his deadly fangs had lacerated the flesh, I started up, with a piercing yell of terror, and rushed forth from the tent, more mad than sane.

CHAPTER XIII.

A NIGHT TO BE REMEMBERED.

INSTANTLY the whole camp was alarmed. Men started up in every direction, shouting "Indians! Indians!" and for a few minutes a scene of the wildest confusion prevailed. As soon as I could make a few of them understand what had occurred, order began to be restored; and Lieutenant Parker, seizing me by the arm, and a dark lantern which hung in one of the wagons, hurried me into the tent, and ordered one of his men to fetch a gallon of whiskey with the utmost despatch.

"My dear fellow," he exclaimed, in an excited tone, "where is it? where is the wound? we must burn it out at once!"

"Quick!" cried I—"do what you can! Oh, God! to die such a death!" and I threw myself down upon the blanket, and pointed to my foot.

He held the light to it a moment, and exclaimed:

"Quick! the other foot! you have made a mistake—there is no wound here."

"No!" said I—"that is where I felt the blow."

At this moment Varney burst into the tent, and, dropping upon his knees by my side, seized my hand, and fairly gasped:

"Great God! Roland, are you bit? have you received your death-wound?"

"I fear so, my dear friend," I answered, in as calm a tone as I could command. "Your prospects of life are better than mine now."

"Oh! say not so! You will get over it—you must, dear Roland! Great God, do not, in Thy mercy, snatch him away thus suddenly!"

"There is no wound," said Parker, in that peculiar tone which shows that the mind of the speaker is suddenly relieved of great anxiety. "You were dreaming, perhaps!"

"No!" said I, examining my foot, with feelings of joy and gratitude no language can express: "I was not dreaming—it was a horrible reality; so horrible, indeed, that the very recollection of it makes me shudder and grow sick. I saw the reptile, by a bright

flash of lightning, as distinctly as I see you now; and I heard his rattle, and felt the blow of his fangs."

"It is very strange! there is no wound to be seen!" said the lieutenant. "Are you sure this is the place where he struck?"

"Yes, I am certain."

He mused a moment, and added:

"How were you lying?"

"On my back."

"Please to take the same position again."

I did so.

"Now where did you see the snake?"

"Just where you stand."

"I have it!" he said, stooping and throwing a corner of the blanket against my foot. "The snake was here, and struck there. It was your blanket that saved you."

"Whatever it was," said I, solemnly, "I humbly thank God for my almost miraculous preservation;" and so overcome was I, at the reflection of what might have been my fate, that I shed tears freely.

"These venomous reptiles are very abundant in this part of the country," pursued the lieutenant; "and it is very dangerous to sleep on the ground, unless completely covered by a blanket. I congratulate you on your wonderful escape. For the future, you had better swing your hammock, or get into the wagon with your friend."

"I shall not soon forget your kindness," said I, taking his hand; "for had I really been poisoned, as

I had every reason to believe, when I alarmed the camp, I think, if in human power, you would have saved my life."

"I should have done what I could," he replied; "but had any of the virus entered a blood-vessel, and been carried to the heart, it is certain you would never have returned to the States alive. You have indeed had a narrow escape; and if you go to the mountains and return, you will doubtless have many more—for this is a country of peril, and no one can say his life is his own from one hour to another. Ah! what lightning we have out here!" he continued, as a sudden flash fairly blinded us, followed instantly by a crash of thunder that seemed to lift us from our feet. "How the storm rages! Hark! what cry is that?"

The cry alluded to came from without, and was instantly repeated, announcing the startling fact that one of the men had been struck by lightning. We all hurried from the tent into the beating storm, and found a poor fellow stretched on the ground, by one of the wagons, to all appearance dead. The wagon itself—the same which Varney had occupied a few minutes before—was much shattered; and the very spot where he had been lying, when my cry of terror aroused him, was literally torn into splinters. As soon as he became conscious of this fact, he grasped my hand nervously, and in a tone made tremulous by deep emotions, exclaimed:

"How mysterious are the ways of Providence!

Your peril, Roland, and its consequences, have been the means of saving my life!"

"Which you may lose in another manner, if you do not seek shelter from this furious storm!" said I, anxiously.

"God is over all, and rules all for the best!" he rejoined, with great solemnity; "and after what has happened to-night, we should not fear to trust to His protection! But as we can render no assistance here, we may as well return to our tent."

We left Lieutenant Parker, with several of his men, busy over the body of the unfortunate soldier, trying to restore him to life; but just as we reached our tent, a fierce gust wrenched it from its fastenings, and sent it whirling through the air.

"Great Heaven! what a night!" cried Varney; and he had scarcely uttered the words, when we heard several fierce neighs, and heavy trampling sounds, followed by a loud shout, above the roar of the storm:

"A stampede! a stampede! the animals have broken loose!"

"There go our horses and mule!" exclaimed Varney; "what next?"

"Heaven only knows!" said I. "We have lost our animals, and tent, and my clothes; and here we both stand, almost as naked as when we came into the world."

In fact, I only had on me a flannel shirt, with a belt underneath, in which was secured my money—

all the rest of my wearing apparel, hanging in my tent at the time of its demolition, having been carried I knew not whither. I say all; but I had another suit in my mule-pack, which fortunately had been thrown into one of the wagons; and I now made search for it in the darkness and confusion which prevailed. We found the wagon, and both got into it, glad to escape from the chilling winds and merciless peltings of the tornado-driven rain.

For two hours the winds blew, the lightnings flashed, the thunders crashed and roared, and the rain fell in torrents; and then the storm ceased its fury, and gradually disappeared to the eastward, leaving the atmosphere at least thirty degrees colder than at the going down of the sun. With what joy we hailed the departure of the storm, mingled with feelings of gratitude for the wonderful preservation of our lives! It is in times like these that we humbly feel our dependence upon an All-wise Power; and the soul, drawn into direct communion with itself, gives forth an offering of thankful prayer, which must be acceptable to Him who reigns supreme over all, and controls alike the fate of millions of worlds and the smallest atom which His will, wisdom and love have brought into existence.

Let me not dwell upon the incidents of that eventful night—for there is enough before me, of a more exciting, thrilling, and even painful interest, to occupy the space I have allotted to my narrative. Day dawned at last, as bright and clear as if the

night had seen no tempest; and we hailed the light, as a weary spirit might hail a messenger of glad tidings from a better world. But it dawned no more for him who had that night felt the visitation of an inscrutable Providence. The poor fellow, prostrated by the bolt of heaven, slept his last sleep; and his body was consigned to dust, on the bank of the stream, not far from our camp; and the news of his fate, in time, went home to his friends, and carried sorrow to many a heart. I pitied him then—cut down, without warning, in the very bloom of life; but I lived to see a time when I could envy his fate, and regret the chance which had saved me from the fangs of a deadly serpent.

After a long search, most of the animals were recovered—and, among them, our horses—but our mule we never saw again. I found our tent about half a mile from camp—but in such a wretched condition as to cause me to abandon it to the further sport of the elements. I also recovered my garments, which had made quite a journey without their owner—but I could not perceive they were in the least improved by traveling through mud and rain on their own account. My rifle and pistols were found lying on the ground where our tent had stood—having, through my excitement, been forgotten till morning—but they were in a condition to require considerable labor to again fit them for use.

It was not till noon that we were prepared to break up our camp and resume our march; but once under

way again, and the day being fine, we pushed rapidly forward, and reached the Little Arkansas about dark. Here we found some large elms, and box elder, and were able to procure fuel, without difficulty, to cook our meals; which principally consisted of coffee, sweetened with sugar, and stakes from a freshly-slaughtered beef, several of which were driven over the route to serve in case of need.

This stream, the Little Arkansas, is a tributary of the river of the same name, and is usually about six or eight feet wide, and some four or five inches in depth; but at this time it was much swollen by the late rains, though not sufficiently so to render it difficult to ford. By invitation of Lieutenant Parker, I slept in the wagon with my friend—who, I may remark, had not suffered from the drenching of the night before, as I had feared at the time he would. In fact, Varney considered that, on the whole, he had improved in health since leaving Independence—and this we both acknowledged to be quite encouraging.

"If I can only hold out till I reach the mountains, my dear friend," he said, "something tells me I shall yet recover to return to her I love."

"God grant it!" said I; "and may the happiness of the future compensate you for all the sorrows and sufferings of the past!"

"You are the most unselfish friend I ever met!" he added, with feeling.

"Because I wish you well, Alfred? Surely, no friend would do less."

"No, not altogether that; but because, at all times, you seem to study my happiness rather than your own."

"Because, being your friend, my own happiness is, to a certain degree, bound up in yours," said I.

"Well, I only hope I may live to repay you."

The next morning we made an early start; and scarcely were we under way, when we espied several antelopes feeding at no great distance; but on seeing us they fled, before any of our party could get near enough for a shot. On our journey to-day, we saw several fresh signs of buffalo, but did not get a sight of one of the animals. Early in the afternoon we reached Cow Creek, which we found difficult to cross, on account of high water and its muddy bottom. In fact, it was some three hours before all the wagons were got safely over, and then we camped on its western bank.

On the following day we came upon a small drove of buffaloes, the first I had ever seen; and as it was resolved that we should kill a few for meat, I joined the party that went in pursuit.

The ordinary method of killing this unwieldly animal, is to ride into the very centre of a drove, single out the fattest, and begin the work of slaughter by discharging holster pistols into his side, near the brisket, till he falls. Sometimes the buffalo, especially if a bull, will run a long distance, and require an

immense deal of shooting, before he will succumb to his fate; and so, when mounted, the worrying down of the unfortunate animal is by some considered very excellent sport. I did not find it so—for I sympathized too much with the poor brute to take any pleasure in the exciting chase; and so, after killing one, by way of experiment, I returned to the train, resolved to shoot no more, unless the flesh were actually required for food.

On our journey to-day, we passed through a large village of prairie-dogs, in which both Varney and myself became exceedingly interested. This is a small, brown animal, with a head not unlike a terrier pup, and a short, stumpy tail, which, when excited, he keeps in constant motion. They select for the site of their village, or town, a large level of sandy soil; and their dwellings are made by throwing up the earth, in a conical shape, to a height of two or three feet, and having a hole in the apex, or summit, which descends vertically to the base, and thence obliquely, for a considerable distance, into the earth. These earthen houses are constructed with so much order and regularity as to give the spaces between them the appearance of streets, and not unfrequently they cover an area of several miles in extent. Owls and rattlesnakes are their companions—the former hopping about at twilight, and feeding upon camelions and lizards, and the latter not scrupling to fill their maws with the young, fat pups of their hospitable entertainers. On the approach of danger, the dogs

run into their holes, and then thrust forth their heads, and set up a series of sharp, squeaking barks. When the danger becomes imminent, they retire from sight altogether; but after waiting awhile in silence, they peep forth very cautiously; and as soon as they discover the coast to be clear, they come out chattering, and have a merry time of it. They have laws and regulations, which they strictly enforce; and a big dog, in the centre of the village, appears to be chief magistrate. Altogether, they are a very interesting, democratic community of animals; and it might not be amiss for here and there some pompous, over-fed city functionary to take a few lessons of true republican simplicity even from them.

Having now fairly entered upon the buffalo range, we found these animals increasing in numbers as we progressed; and I was glad to hear our humane commander, after the first half-a-day's sport, issue peremptory orders against their wanton destruction. Our next camp was upon the bank of the Arkansas; and, the night following, upon the grand prairie, within a mile of the river, whither we led our animals to water, and from which we brought what was needed for our own use. Here, as not a splinter of wood could be found, our fires were made of "*bois de vache*,"* which, when dry, proves a very good substitute, and is always used by hunters and others on the open plains. As this was known to be a

* Literally, "wood of cow"—but, appropriately, "buffalo manure."

dangerous part of the country, our wagons were made to form a hollow square—inside of which, soon after dark, many of the animals were driven—while the others were picketed close around outside, and a strong guard set.

What happened the reader shall see.

CHAPTER XIV.

ATTACKED BY INDIANS.

THE night set in cloudy, and the clouds gradually became more dense, while the air grew cool and damp, an almost certain precursor of rain. I crept into the wagon with Varney; but most of the men rolled themselves in their blankets, and laid down on the earth, outside of the hollow square. For a long time I laid awake, listening to the dismal howlings of the prairie wolves, which are always to be found in great numbers on the buffalo range, lying in wait to kill and devour the wounded and defenceless cows and calves. The expected rain had begun to fall, and its gentle patter on the canvas covering of the wagon had just lulled me into a doze, when I was startled by the sharp, successive reports of three or four rifles, mingled with the cries of "Indians! Indians!" and the fierce, unearthly yells of a large body of savages.

"Heavens! we are attacked!" cried Varney.

"Remain where you are!" said I, hurriedly; "you are safer here than elsewhere;" and, having laid down with my clothes on, with my knife and pistols in my belt, I instantly grasped my rifle, powder-horn and bullet-pouch, and leaped to the ground outside.

I was now in the midst of a scene of the wildest confusion; yells, shouts, and the reports of fire-arms filled my ears; men were running to and fro; horses were neighing, stamping, kicking, and cattle bellowing; but it was so dark that I could not distinguish friend from foe, and therefore I stood undetermined and bewildered. Suddenly I felt something encircle my neck with a snap—the fire flew from my eyes—and at the same moment I was jerked to the earth, and felt myself being dragged over the ground with great rapidity. Not being deprived of consciousness, I knew at once what had occurred. I had been perceived and lassoed* by a mounted Indian, who was now dragging me by the neck to a safe distance, for the purpose of killing and scalping me. Fortunately for me, the noose had passed over the barrel of my rifle, in front of my chin, so that the rope drew upon the back of my neck; while the tension of the lasso, as the horse dashed away at great speed, kept my head elevated above the earth; and retaining in that awful moment my presence of mind, I caught the rope with one hand,

* The lasso is a long rope, generally made of hide or hair, with a noose at one end, and is thrown with great precision, by Mexicans and Indians, over the head of the object they wish to secure.

and held to it, while with the other I drew my knife and cut it near the loop.

I was now released from the most imminent peril, but lay half dead upon the ground, listening to the clamor behind me, and thanking God for my almost miraculous escape from sudden death. I knew I was much hurt, but I hoped not mortally. My neck was already swelled, and began to grow stiff, and felt as if it had been twisted once round; my body was much bruised, and my legs felt as if the skin were scraped off in spots all the way down to my feet; but I was satisfied there were no bones broken; and if not injured internally, I had every reason to let my heart swell with gratitude to God for his wonderful Providence.

But setting aside all my injuries, whether trifling or important, my position was still one of great peril. I was lying on the open prairie, some little distance from camp, and literally surrounded by Indians—for I could hear their horses darting hither and thither on all sides, probably chasing and securing some of our animals, which they had put to flight—this, of course, being their principal object in attacking us—and every moment I was fearful some beast would tread upon me. I gathered myself upon my hands and knees, ready to spring aside should I discover a horse advancing directly upon me; but I made no effort to return to camp; for, aside from considering myself as safe where I was, I did not feel capable of any great

exertion, and had no desire to have my neck again stretched with another lasso.

In this position, some two or three minutes passed; and I was listening to the infernal yells of the savages —mingled with the shouts of my companions, the reports of fire-arms, and other sounds of conflict— when I was startled by hearing the loud snort of a horse close behind me. I turned my eyes in that direction, and, after a sharp, steady look into the darkness, I fancied I could perceive a still darker shadow moving toward me. One of my pistols had been torn from my belt, but the other remained; and grasping this and my knife, I dropped down flat upon the earth, with my eyes steadily fixed upon the shadow, which, as it drew close to me, I could perceive assume the figure of an Indian.

At first I was surprised that an Indian should be on foot, approaching me at that slow, stealthy pace— for I felt almost certain that no human eye could see me where I lay—but I soon comprehended all. The savage who had captured me, on finding I had escaped from the lasso, and doubtless thinking me dead or badly wounded, had cautiously returned on his trail, for the purpose of getting my scalp. He had dismounted from his beast, and led him forward, till the snort of the animal—for the true Indian horse never approaches the white man without signs of fear —had warned him of my proximity; when, leaving his horse behind him, he had stealthily advanced

alone, till my eye had been able to restore his seeming shadow to a substantial human figure.

"Well, my worthy friend," thought I, "you have come back on a fool's errand; and if my weapons do not fail me, there will probably be some howling in your lodge, when your infernal, thieving, murdering companions return to their village."

I knew he did not see me—for his head was bent forward, and he was feeling his way, as it were, at a very slow, stealthy pace. At last he stopped within a foot of me, and was just in the act of dropping down, probably with the design of crawling up to me, supposing me still several feet distant, when, thrusting out my arm suddenly, I pressed the muzzle of the pistol against his breast, and pulled the trigger. With a yell of surprise, disappointment, rage and pain, he bounded back, and fell, and rolled over and over upon the moist earth; and then, uttering a long, gurgling groan, he lay perfectly still.

"There, my fine fellow!" muttered I, grinding my teeth with a kind of bitter satisfaction; "how do you like that? Perhaps you would prefer dragging somebody else by the neck over the prairie; but it is the private opinion of a certain white gentleman from the States that you never will."

It may seem a little strange to the reader, that one who had so recently felt compunctions of conscience at shooting a villain who had assailed his life, should now glory, as it were, in killing another of a different race; but so it was; and it only shows how much

custom, public opinion, and education have to do with conscience after all. Strictly and morally, it was just as wrong for me to kill the Indian, as it would have been, under the circumstances, to have killed Loyola; but one appeared perfectly justifiable in my eyes, and the other only a shade removed from murder.

Scarcely had I shot the Indian, when the fight terminated at the camp; and with fierce signal yells, the savages seemed to collect in a body and dash away—the hoofs of their horses thundering over the earth together, and gradually dying out in the distance.

I now ventured to get upon my feet, for the purpose of returning to the camp; but I was so bruised and lame, that it was with difficulty I could walk; while my neck was so swollen and stiff, that I could only turn my head by turning my body. I had only taken two or three steps, when I heard the horse of the Indian snort and whinny; and it at once occurred to me to make a capture of the beast—perhaps to replace my own—for it was not improbable my own had been stolen during the *melee*. So I turned back and groped my way up to the animal, which I found near his dead master, snuffing, snorting, whinnying, and trembling, evidently uncertain whether to remain or fly. He permitted me to approach him, though not without signs of fear, and a half disposition to spring away; but probably the fact of his master (for whom he seemed to have an affection) remaining so

quietly on the ground, so near, gave him confidence in a white stranger.

At all events, he suffered me to take hold of him, and pat him on the neck; but when I attempted to mount him, he began to shy and snort. I coaxed and fondled him, till he became quite docile; but then I discovered it would be no easy matter to mount, even should he remain perfectly still—for in place of a regular saddle with stirrups, he had only a part of a buffalo-hide strapped to his back; and his bridle was little else than a halter, without bit—his rider having been able to govern him in a way peculiar to the native of the wilderness. Taking the whole matter into consideration, I began to be doubtful about the propriety of mounting him at all; but it was unpleasant to me to walk; and besides, I felt some pride in my exploit, and thought it would look well to ride into camp on a steed I had captured.

But mounting where I was, was out of the question —for I was too stiff and lame to make the requisite spring; and so I set off on a walk, leading him by the halter. Had I continued on to camp in this manner, it would have saved me no little trouble; but happening to stumble against a small bank of earth, I led him round to the lower side, and, after some difficulty, succeeded in getting upon his back. He now appeared very docile, and quiet, and I started him forward at a gentle pace, in the direction of the camp, being guided only by the voices of my companions, for there was not a light to be seen.

All went very well till I was nearly up to the wagons; when some one, mistaking me for one of the savages, fired without challenging. Whether the horse was hit or not, I never knew; but he wheeled suddenly to the right, and bounded away like a comet—my friends giving me a parting volley—the balls whizzing over and under me, and increasing the terror of my frightened beast.

It was now a John Gilpin race, sure enough; for I found, after repeated trials, that I could neither control nor guide the fiery animal, and so was compelled to let him have his own way. It was easy riding enough, but whither was he bearing me? Was he following the trail of his companions? and would he carry his captor into captivity, and thus take his revenge upon me for the death of his master? It was not a pleasant speculation, and I would have given half my fortune to have been safely on the ground; but getting to the ground, while under such speed, was not to be thought of, unless I could make up my mind for sudden death or broken bones; and until I could see as imminent danger ahead, I did not feel like taking the risk. Should I come within sight or hearing of the Indians, I would leap from his back, be the consequences what they might; but, till then, I thought it best to take my chances where I was.

It was a wild, fearful ride; and yet to me it had something of a sublime fascination. On, on we sped, over the level prairie, my flying steed scarce seeming to touch the earth, as he darted through the thick

darkness. In broad day-light, and under other circumstances, the ride would have delighted me; for it had the sense of flying, rather than running, and I would have risked my neck for the peculiar sensation of such wild freedom; but bounding through darkness, leaving my friends behind me, and rushing perhaps into the very jaws of death, or worse, was a different matter; and yet, as I have said, it had a sort of sublime fascination, and threw over the spirit and influence not unlike that which urges an adventurer to some bold and perilous exploit without rational motive. On, on, we sped, in inky darkness, the rain pouring steadily down, and not a thing to be seen, above, below, or around. On! on! Now splashing through a stream or pool—now flying through a startled herd of buffaloes—sometimes brushing their shaggy manes, as they strove to clear the way—with wolves howling on the right and left—on! on! Mazeppa-like—though not like him to be borne to a throne, but rather to sudden death, or the torture-fires of a merciless foe.

Miles now lay between me and the camp of my friends; and yet my "wild prairie steed" had not slackened his railroad pace; and when he would, and where, and what would be the end, the Lord only knew! Again I tried to check him, but in vain; and again I yielded to my fate, with what resignation I could command, commending my soul to Him who reigns and rules in time and eternity.

At last I heard the hollow, gurgling sound of an angry flood; but ere I could fairly comprehend what

was before me, my maddened steeed had plunged into the furious torrent, completely burying me under water. So sudden was the immersion, that I nearly lost my seat; but I had a tight grasp on his halter and mane, and with him I came to the surface. His speed was now checked, and I thanked God for it—for I knew he must be swimming a river—and I resolved to leap from his back when he should gain the opposite shore, toward which he was struggling with energy unrelaxed. Fierce was his contest with the swollen stream—which sent its waters past us with a hoarse murmur, gurgle and roar—as if, resolved not to give us up to life and liberty, it were already chanting our funeral dirge.

At length, after a long, violent struggle with the watery element—which, on my part, was attended with an intense, painful anxiety—I felt the feet of the gallant beast touch the ground; and the next moment, with a strong leap, he rose clear of the stream. Now was my time; and instantly springing from his back, I alighted among some bushes; while, with a quick bound and a snort, he disappeared, rushing away like the wind.

I was now safe on *terra firma;* but on what precise point of the great globe, I could not tell. Judging from the speed at which I had been borne from my friends, and the time which had elapsed since leaving the camp, some twenty miles now lay between us; and if my course had been westward, it was reasonable to suppose I was now on the western, or

rather southern, bank of the far-famed Pawnee Fork—for I had heard this stream described as broad, deep, and rapid after heavy rains, and just such a stream I had crossed.

But what was to be done now? I got upon my feet, with my water-soaked garments clinging to me, like a second skin, and felt for my weapons—but not one was to be found. Rifle, pistols, knife, all had been left upon the prairie, and I had nothing with which to defend myself against an enemy—or, what would probably be of more importance, to kill game for food, till I could find some human being of my race. This was not a very agreeable discovery; but I had made so many remarkable escapes, since leaving the States, that I felt rather like trusting to my good fortune than giving away to despair. Why borrow trouble that might never come in any other shape?

I pushed through the bushes, ran against the trunks of two or three trees, and then found myself once more on the open prairie—the rushing river hoarsely murmuring behind me. There was no change overhead; the clouds were as low and black as ever, the night as dark as the fabled realms of Pluto, and the rain still falling. Which way to go I did not know; but any way seemed better than sitting down or standing still—although every step I took caused me to remember the rough journey I had made at the heels of the horse which had since borne me hither; and so, after some debate with myself, I turned to the left, which led down the stream, and continued to walk very slowly

for something like an hour, keeping the roaring river within hearing.

I was thus proceeding carefully, and thinking of poor Varney, and what a state of excitement would follow his discovery of my loss, when my foot struck against some object, which seemed to spring away from it. Surprised and alarmed, I made a quick backward step; but at the same moment my legs were seized, and jerked from under me; and as I came heavily to the earth, a hoarse voice said:

"White or red? yelp her out! afore I let daylight clean through ye!"

CHAPTER XV.

AN OLD COMPANION.

"WHITE, Sam Botter!" exclaimed I; for there was no mistaking that voice, by one who had heard it as often as I had.

"Why, chaw me up fur a liar, ef it isn't Freshwater, kim down in the storm!" exclaimed Sam, in a tone of surprise. "Ef I didn't take you fur a—— sneaking Injin, why was the devil painted black? Augh! Why, boy, I'm glad to see you—or feel ye, rayther—for what's the use of talking 'bout eyes on sich a night as this hyer? Whar d'ye kim from, anyhow?"

"I have been riding a John Gilpin race, Sam," said I.

"What's that?"

"Let me explain. About twenty miles from here, as near as I can judge, providing this is Pawnee Fork—"

"Wall, hoss, it ain't nothing else," interrupted Sam.

"Well, then, about twenty miles from here, on the other side of this stream, is a military camp, where your friend and fellow-traveller, in the shape of the present narrator, undertook to go to sleep; but being attacked by Indians, he got up, got his head into an Indian lasso, was dragged by the neck too far to be agreeable, cut the lasso, killed the savage, mounted his horse, was run away with, and here he is. Now what do you think of that for an adventure, eh?"

Sam ripped out an oath, and exclaimed:

"Freshwater, this hyer old one-eyed nigger hain't got the sense some people has, and I'll jest trouble you to go over that thar agin."

"Certainly, Sam, and I will be more explicit;" and I mentioned the prominent events which had occurred since we parted at Council Grove.

"Wall," said Botter, interjecting an oath, "you're one on 'em, Freshwater—chaw me! Why, ef this hyer last fun of yourn don't beat the d—l, why was wolves growed? Augh!"

"But now," continued I, "pray tell me how I find

you here, whom I thought many a league away? and where is your partner?"

"Wolfy's gone under!" returned Botter, with a long, deep sigh.

"Dead?" exclaimed I, with a start.

"Yes—he war rubbed out by the Pawnees, the infarnal devils!"

"Explain!"

"It's wall you didn't kim with us," continued Sam, in a doleful tone; "fur Shadbones would hev been made meat on, sure, and it's like you wouldn't hev kim out no better—though you seem to hev the nine lives to the cat. I'll jest tell you how it war, Freshwater; but you kin gamble on to it, that it'll make this hyer old nigger feel as watery as ef he war peeling inyuns. Augh!"

After a pause, the old trapper proceeded with his story, which I shall take the liberty to abridge and give in my own language. He and Stericks had met with no misfortune, till after passing Cow Creek; when, one night, as they were encamped upon the bank of a small stream, they were set upon by a large party of Pawnees, who killed and scalped Stericks, and made a clean sweep of all their animals, traps, "possibles," etc.—Botter himself barely escaping in the darkness, after shooting two of the savages, by secreting himself under the muddy bank of the creek. Since then, he had travelled on foot and alone, and was so far on his way to Bent's Fort, where he hoped to meet with some friends who would help

him to another outfit. All he had been able to save of his property, were his weapons, and the garments he had on—even the money I gave him at Council Grove, being in the possession of Stericks, had fallen into the hands of the plunderers when they stripped the body. He had met a small hunting party, however, and traded a clasp-knife for a blanket, in which he invariably rolled himself at night, heads, hands, and all, in order to protect himself against rattlesnakes, which, as I have shown, sometimes intrude upon the sleeper in a very unceremonious manner. He was thus deposited on the wet earth, soaking in the rain, when I stumbled upon him. But I did not "catch him napping," as the phrase is—for your true mountaineer seldom sleeps sounder than a cat, and Botter had had good cause to keep his one eye on the watch. He had heard my approaching footsteps; but knowing, by the sound, I had no companion, he had resolved, if I crossed his camp, to capture me; and, should I prove to be an Indian, to take my scalp, in revenge for what he had already suffered from the hated race. The result the reader has seen.

"Well," said, I when he had concluded, "I am sorry for your loss, and will cheerfully do something toward giving you another outfit."

"Thank'e!" returned Botter; "and it's like I kin do you and Shadbones a good turn, ef you go to the mountains."

"Why, yes," said I, "the very thing! he will re-

quire a guide and companion, after reaching Bent's, and why not take him with you?"

"I reckon we kin fix it," replied the trapper. "Poor old Wolfy's under, and I hain't got nary human now to hurry me along, and so I'm jest agwine to take my time—chaw me! I never knowed nothing kim of hurrying; and so I used to tell Wolfy; but he knowed better, he said, and now he don't know nothing. So we go—one arter to'ther gits rubbed out, and thar's the end on't. Augh!"

"I think myself," said I, "as events have turned out, you gained nothing in parting from us. If we had continued in your company, you would have traveled slower perhaps; yet who knows but by that very means you would have avoided the consequences you now lament?"

"Wall, wall," returned Sam, philosophically, "thar ain't no use in talking about what mought hev been —bekase we humans can't see into the futur', any more nor ef it was a sand-bank; all we kin do is, to do what we think's best, take what kims, and let the rest go. We can't al'ays float—we's all got to gin in and go under some time—and so what's the use kicking agin it. Thar ain't none—chaw me! Freshwater, of all the boys I knowed, twenty year ago, up to the mountains, thar ain't three living 'cept me, and I 'spect my time ain't fur off. Wall, when it kims, this hyer old beaver'll see the end of a heap of hard tramps, you kin gamble on to that. Augh!"

"There is a Power above us, Sam, that has guided

our steps when we have walked in dangerous paths, else should we never have seen the present!" said I, solemnly.

"Expect," rejoined Sam, musingly; "leastways, this hyer old nigger once heerd a preacher say some'at to that; and ef he didn't know, why was gospeling diskivered? Augh!"

"Then, considering that our steps are guarded and guided," pursued I, "why should we ever shrink from what our conscience tells us is right?"

"We shouldn't, Freshwater—nary once—chaw me!"

"Then, if you think so, why may I not count on you to meet danger in a good cause?"

"What's the sign, Freshwater?"

"I am thinking of the girl that was captured by the Indians," said I; "and that she ought to be rescued; and though I know the attempt would be one of peril, yet I am far from feeling satisfied it should be avoided on that account."

"That thar would be jumping into the fire, and expecting to git out without being burnt," said Sam.

"To continue your simile," returned I, "we might get out alive, even if scorched."

"You still hev the notion of taking a tramp arter that thar gal, hey?" rejoined the old trapper.

"I have resolved never to return to the States until her liberty is regained, or I have made at least one attempt to rescue her."

"That's said like a lad of speret," pursued Botter;

"but you'll find it one of the wost jobs ever you tried —ef you don't, jest chaw old One-Eyed Sam up fur a liar! Augh!"

"But can I not persuade you to accompany me, Sam, if I pay you well for your time? You can but die once, you know; and your life is continually in peril, go where you will, do what you may."

"Thar's some'at in to that," said Botter, reflectively; "but we ain't so sartin of losing our ha'r out hyer, as we would be to the Injun's own stamping-ground—no sir-ee."

"With one of your experience, in Indian ways, I think we might succeed," said I, hopefully. "Remember, the lives of those females are as valuable as our own."

"To them!" returned Sam, emphatically; "'spect they is to them! but not to us—chaw me!"

"The life of one," I returned, "I at least consider of as much value as my own; and I would willingly peril mine to save hers, if certain it could be saved in no other way."

"She's some'at to you, I reckon?" said Sam.

"You can judge from what I have said. But to the question. Will money, or any other consideration, or all combined, induce you to make the venture with me for her release?"

"Jest us two, Freshwater?"

"If I can engage no more; but I will do what I can to get others to accompany us."

"I'll think about it," replied Botter; "I'll think

about it, Freshwater; old One-Eyed Sam 'll think about it, boy; I will, chaw me! Augh!"

"Well, take your time, and think over the matter seriously. I will not urge you to a hasty decision—but I will give you something to consider besides the danger. If you go with me, I will, before starting, deposit, with any person you may name, an amount of money sufficient to purchase you a complete outfit for your business; and the moment these female prisoners are safely lodged in any fort, this money shall be yours."

"You take away the chances, most powerful, when you say two on 'em," said Sam.

"Well, say one then—the girl. I should like to rescue both—but the younger shall be my first care. Let me add, however, that there may be no misunderstanding, that I have already spoken to a military officer concerning their rescue, and he has promised to report to his superior; and should a military force be sent against the Indians, I may not need your services. Of that, however, we will speak hereafter."

I squatted down on the wet earth, and spent the remainder of the night in conversation with the old trapper. The rain continued to fall gently, so that it would have been difficult to kindle a fire, had we not even been in a part of the country where it would have been dangerous to expose ourselves to its light—so we sat in mud and darkness, and talked till daylight. I suffered some from my bruises and swollen neck, and my wet garments made me chilly; but

after my wonderful escapes, I felt I had no reason to complain of trifles—though I hailed the break of morn with a sensation of gladness I had never before experienced from the same cause.

As soon as we could fairly see, Sam set to work, as only an old woodsman knows how, to start a fire of wet materials; and after laboring for half an hour, he succeeded in getting up a cheerful blaze, which filled me with delight. He now approached a tree on the river's bank, and cut down a large piece of buffalo meat, which he had suspended there the night before; and this we sliced, and toasted, and devoured, without bread or salt; and I do not know that I ever ate a heartier meal, or one that I relished more.

By the time we had finished our breakfast, the sun was fairly above the horizon, though not visible to us—for low, dark, humid clouds shut in the upward view, and the rain continued to fall steadily.

"Thar, now, Freshwater," said Sam, wiping his mouth with his hand, and smacking his lips, "don't you 'spect we'd best begin to tramp a bit?"

"Why," said I, alluding to a previous conversation, "I thought you had decided to remain here, and wait for our friends!"

"Not right plum on this spot, did I?"

"No, but in this vicinity."

"Wall, we kin tramp a heap, and not go fur; and it's the opine of this hyer old beaver, that you'd best stretch your legs a little, fur fear they'll spyle, all doubled up, arter the infarnal scraping they has had."

"There may be something in that," replied I; "but where shall we go?"

"Why, we'll put out and fotch a buffler, or deer—you is jam up, plum center to deers, you know—wagh! hagh! wagh!—and then we'll kim back to fish."

"Better set me to fishing at once, if you have hook and line," said I—"for you see I have no weapons for the hunt."

"That's a fact," rejoined Sam, "I'd forgot you is woss off nor me—chaw me! But s'pose we take a short tramp fust! I'll kill so'thing, you kin bet high; and then we'll kim back, fix up my old blanket on sticks, fur kivering from the rain, start a fire, cook our meat, and hev one of the times to loafing. Augh!"

"Very well—lead the way."

Botter had managed to keep his rifle pretty dry; but to have it in good order, he now discharged and reloaded it; and then we set off northward—I being compelled to walk rather slow—though I did not find my limbs so stiff and sore as the night previous. We had not gone far, when the old trapper suddenly stopped, and pointing with his finger to some objects in the distance, inquired:

"What's them, Freshwater? My one eye ain't what it used to was on to a long sight."

"I think they may be deer," I replied—"or perhaps young buffaloes; but I cannot see very distinctly, for a steam-like vapor rises from the wet earth."

"Wall, boy," returned Sam, after a long, steady look, with something like exultation, "bad as this hyer old nigger's peeper is, it kin jest beat any two you've got, or else I'm a —— old sinner. Them is mules, Freshwater, and thar's more humans about, you kin gamble on to that."

"I hope they are not Indians."

"Nary once."

"How do you know?"

"Seed 'em, younker."

"Where?"

"Kim along, and I'll show you."

"Are you sure?"

"Expect."

"Do not make any mistake—I can see no one."

"Sam, you old one-eyed hoss," said Botter, apostrophising himself, "you is good yit, bad as you think you is—you kin jest take down these hyer settlement chaps a heap—ef you can't, why was 'bacca growed?" and the old trapper ended with a hearty laugh.

As we approached the animals, I not only discovered they were mules, but that Sam was right in all his observations; for at a little distance to the left, were two persons, seated, a la Turque, upon a large water-proof cloth, larger than a blanket, which, being drawn up around them, kept their feet and legs perfectly dry; while their heads and bodies were protected from the falling rain by black, glazed, conical-shaped, broad-brimmed sombreros, and sarapes impervious to the liquid element. They were both

quietly smoking pipes, and showed no fear at our approach, though they did not fail to eye us sharply.

As I drew near them, I was not a little surprised to perceive that one was a white man and the other a negro—though the face of the white man was dark and bronzed, and both had long, black beards, which, at a distance, gave them much the same appearance. Little did I think, however, as I eyed them with curiosity and speculation, how closely the destiny of one would be linked with mine in the yet unexplored future which lay before us.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER.

"I GIVE you good morning, gentlemen!" said the white man, making a slight inclination of his head, and speaking with a foreign accent. "You see my boy* and myself are making ourselves as comfortable as we can in the rain."

"You've got the nigger to a tighter fit nor I'd like on a juicy day like this hyer," returned Sam, bluntly. "Howsomever, every body to his likes, and this hyer old one-eyed hoss has his notions. Augh!"

As Botter spoke, the negro darted upon him a sharp,

* It is customary with Southerners to speak of their black male servants as "boys," without regard to their age.

angry glance, and then turned his head away; and the countenance of the white man slightly changed, as if he considered the remark injudicious and ill-timed. Perceiving all this, I hastened to say:

"You are certainly comfortably fixed; and let my plain-spoken friend here say what he may, I for one should feel myself the gainer by an exchange of situations. If I had had forethought enough to have provided myself with such water-proof garments as yours, I should not at this moment be such a miserable victim of Dame Nature's hydropathic treatment; but I am young—my friend Sam, here, thinks me green—and so, doubtless, with age and seasoning, I shall get wisdom."

The stranger smiled, and rejoined, with pleasant irony:

"But your friend here, with all *his* experience—and it is quite evident, from his damaged figure-head, he has been over rough places—with all his experience, I say, it seems *he* has not learned the mode of keeping a dry skin any more than yourself."

"Augh!" grunted Sam, contemptuously—"what's a little water to a old beaver as has seed snakes in his time?"

"Why, water is everything to a beaver," pursued the stranger, good-humoredly; "and if you are a beaver, it is quite reasonable you should like to soak in your favorite element."

"What's the sign?" said Sam, a little testily.

"One sign of the beaver is a dam," replied the other, quietly, his dark eye twinkling with humor.

"Wall, then, d—n beavers, and you too, ef you can't answer a civil question!" rejoined the old trapper.

"I suppose," pursued the other, taking a strong pull at his nearly extinguished meerschaum, and puffing out quite a volume of smoke—"I suppose I ought not to take any offence at your coupling beavers and myself in your malediction—because, by your own showing, you are one of the broad-tailed quadrupeds —and I do not think any one can curse himself and seriously mean what he says."

"Wall, as I'm a living nigger—" resumed Botter; when the other interrupted him with a loud laugh, and the exclamation:

"A nigger? Why what, in the name of all the saints, will you be next? First a horse, then a beaver, and now a nigger! Good sooth! you will turn out to be a whole menagerie if you keep on! Cato, (turning to the black,) he claims to be of your race now!"

"Well, I's doesn't own him," replied Cato, with a malicious chuckle.

Sam looked puzzled, and was evidently at a stand whether to get up a fight, or laugh the whole matter off as a joke. I was determined there should be no quarrel, if I could prevent it; and I hastened to turn the conversation into another channel.

"*Badinage* aside," said I, addressing the stranger,

"have you any news of our mutual enemies, the Indians?"

"Nothing personal to relate, sir; but on my way up here from the South, I met a company of Santa Fe traders, who said they had been attacked, and had lost five men killed, and two females taken prisoners."

"Alas! I know that tragical story too well!" said I; "the news reached me at Council Grove the day following the sad event, and was brought by four young men who were in the fight. But did you hear any mention of the names of those who were captured and killed?"

"I did not—or if I did, I have forgotten them. Being all strangers, I felt no interest in names."

"And was there no talk of trying to rescue the prisoners?"

"No mention was made to me of such a design."

"Would to Heaven," returned I, "that I could collect together a dozen, or even half that number, of brave, determined, experienced men! *I* would make the venture."

"Are the female prisoners related to you?" inquired the stranger.

"No! but one of them is a beautiful girl, of seventeen, in whom I am deeply interested."

"Seventeen!" repeated the stranger; "young and beautiful! what a horrible fate is hers!"

"And of your country, too, if I mistake not!" said I.

"How, sir?"

"Pardon me! are you not a Spaniard?"

"I am, sir! And is this girl, you speak of, Spanish?"

"I cannot say positively—for she herself knows not what country gave her birth; but, from her earliest recollection, she spoke the Spanish language."

"Indeed! you interest me!" returned the stranger, earnestly. "Pray tell me all you know of her? But, I beg your pardon! I have kept you standing in the rain, when I might have had the courtesy to provide you with a dry covering, to say the least. Cato, get my other sombrero and sarape from the mule-pack, and let the gentleman take your place! I have just let my morning fire go out; but you seem to be chilly, and I will have another kindled. Here—step in here!" he continued, throwing back the oil-cloth covering around his feet, as the negro hastened to obey his orders.

I did as directed, and squatted down by his side, when he continued:

"Doubtless you are surprised to find me provided with an extra sombrero; but the truth is, on one of my jaunts through Mexico, I lost the one I had on, in a river; and was obliged to go a long distance, through a heavy rain, before I could get another; and since then I have always taken care to be prepared against accidents. But how shall I provide for your friend here? although he says he does not mind water. I have an extra oil-cloth baggage cover,

stranger," he continued, addressing Botter, "and suppose you wrap yourself in that, and smoke a pipe with me!"

"You git this hyer old one-eyed"—Sam stopped, with a look of some perplexity, and then added—"white gintleman, a heap, when you talk about 'bacca—for I haint had a smell for two days—but cuss the kivering! for my old hide is as tough as bufflers is, and water won't spile it, you kin gamble on to that. No! jest you gin me some 'bacca, I've got a pipe, and you and Freshwater kin spread yourselves fur a big talk, while I go to make buffler kim. Augh!"

"You shall have a pound, my worthy friend, and no hard thoughts between us!" rejoined the Spaniard, with a laugh. "Cato, give the *white* gentleman—for he is no longer a horse, beaver, or 'nigger'—a pound of the best tobacco; and then (he added this in an under-tone) the menagerie will depart on a buffalo hunt."

In a few minutes I found myself very comfortably situated indeed—that is to say, comparatively speaking. Although with wet garments next to my skin, I was now protected against the falling rain, and my outside coverings brought warmth to my body, which for many long hours had been shivering with cold.

"You will, of course, join me in a smoke?" said my new acquaintance, producing another meerschaum, as he prepared to refill the one in his mouth.

"Thank you! I never use tobacco in any shape," I replied.

"Ah! sir, you know not how much pleasure you lose!" he rejoined. "It may seem incredible to you —but, sir, I have actually found more real enjoyment in a pipe of tobacco, smoked in the wilderness, alone with my thoughts, than I have, at other times, surrounded by a circle of friends. It calms the nerves —it soothes the mind—it gives the imagination a dreamy play; and you live over the past, or go into the future, and pictures of happiness, with well known forms and faces, float around you in the gently curling vapor."

"But all end in smoke," said I, laughing.

"As what does not, sir!" he quickly rejoined. "It is happiness for the time; and I have lived long enough to be satisfied there is no earthly happiness more durable than the smoke which floats above my meerschaum."

"You may be right," said I; "but I should be miserable to believe you."

"Better for you to believe me now, than to suddenly awake from your youthful dream of future delight, to the bitter, heart-blighting reality! You are young, healthy, sanguine — all before you seems bright and beautiful—but you only see the glaciers of far-off mountains sparkling in the sun, which a near inspection will prove to be crags of ice—cold, dreary, and unattainable—or valueless when attained. I saw with your eyes once; but alas! I have lived to

stand upon the Alpine peaks, and shiver in my desolation."

As my new acquaintance said this, he drew a long, deep sigh, and, casting down his eyes, appeared to become absorbed in a painful reverie. While he thus sat silent, I eyed him closely, and with that feeling of romantic curiosity which we involuntarily attach to a high-bred, intellectual stranger, whose history is to us unknown, and whose air is one from which our fancy weaves a mystery. He seemed to be about forty years of age, and his dark, Castilian features were handsome, expressive, and intellectual. His hair was long, black, and of a wavy curl; and a thick, black beard, neatly trimmed, covered the lower part of his face. His profile was straight, with a slightly acquiline nose; and when his thin lips parted with a cheerful laugh, he displayed two rows of white, even teeth. His eyes were rather hazel than black, and their general expression was soft and winning; but varying with every mood of their owner—from the twinkle of humor, the gentleness of affection, to the fiery fierceness of passion. His height, as I afterward ascertained, was a trifle under six feet, and his form athletic, flexible, and graceful. Of his character, temperament, and intellect, I need not speak, as the reader can form his own idea of the inner man and his abilities from what will follow in the course of my narrative.

"I crave your pardon!" said the stranger, suddenly looking up: "I have been letting my memory recall

a painful scene. Sometimes, sir, I wish my memory were blotted out with my hopes; and then again, it gives me a kind of twilight pleasure—bringing back, as it were, the evening of a glorious day, without the day itself. You will not understand all my similes, and metaphorical expressions, and allusions, perhaps —but it does not follow that you will thereby be the loser. Well, well, what a world this is! and what a curious life we live in it! Here now are two persons, of different countries, different races, and born thousands of miles apart, sitting quietly down in a savage wilderness, to enjoy a *tête-à-tête*, and without even so much as knowing each other's names. I am called Juan El Doliente."*

"My name, sir, is Roland Rivers," I replied.

"By-the-by, how is it I find you without weapons? it did not strike me before."

I gave him a brief account of what had occurred the night previous.

"A very remarkable escape," he rejoined, as I concluded; "but you spoke of this old woodsman as an acquaintance—had you met before? You see I am curious to know all I can of you!"

"Then I had better begin at the beginning," returned I; and I briefly informed him where I was from, why I came to leave home, and narrated the prominent incidents of my journey, with the exception of my adventure with Loyola and Adele.

"You are anxious to rejoin your friend, I suppose,"

* Anglice—The Sufferer.

he pursued, "and I can appreciate his feelings at your loss. He will look upon you as one risen from the dead. If agreeable to you, we will remain together in this vicinity, and wait for this military party to come up."

"You could not propose anything to please me better," I replied.

"And as I have no particular locality in view, suppose I keep you company for a few days?"

"Better still, sir," said I.

"Confess, now, you are curious to know something of my history?"

"I certainly am."

"You wonder why I am here, with no companion but my servant, and with no particular destination in view?"

"I cannot deny I am curious on that point too," said I.

"Suppose I tell you I am traveling merely to kill time?"

"Then I think you have chosen a locality where you are most likely to be killed yourself," returned I.

"Well, what of that? Man dies but once, and life has but little pleasure to me now. It was not always so, my young friend. There was a time when I should have shrunk from the King of Terrors, as Death is called—not because of personal fear—but because I was surrounded by those I loved, and was happy. They are all gone now," he added, in a tremulous voice, brushing a tear from his eye; "and I stand

alone, a blasted oak. By and by, perhaps, I will give you a sketch of my history; but not now—I am not in the mood now."

"If you are traveling to find relief to an aching heart," said I, "I am surprised that you seek it here in the wilderness."

"Where then?"

"Among the haunts of men."

"*You* left the haunts of men and came hither for pleasure, did you not?"

"But I had met with no misfortune."

"And therefore had never tried human sympathy for consolation," he replied. "There are sorrows which human sympathy can assuage; but, sir, the heart may hold a grief so terrible, so crushing, that it can only find relief in undisturbed communion with the God who made it; and Healways seems to me to be nearest in the solemn solitude of the pathless wilderness. But aside from this, the man who has a natural desire for travel, likes variety; and having seen all that the genius and art and skill and learning of man can produce, he turns to the wilderness for novelty, and studies the almost infinite beauties of nature with fresh delight. How forcibly your great English poet expresses this sentiment!

"'There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep sea, and music in its roar:
I love not man the less, but Nature more,

From these our interviews, in which I steal
From all I may be, or have been before,
To mingle with the Universe, and feel
What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal.'

"Ah! Byron! Byron!" he added, after repeating the foregoing stanza with great effect—"what genius and misery united in him! I can appreciate him, for my own heart has experienced some of his desolation. But come! we must not forget the subject which drew us together. You were about to tell me something of the history of one whom you now suppose to be a prisoner among the Indians! I have all the time been eager to hear your story, and yet have purposely delayed the narrative—can you understand this contradiction?"

"I cannot, sir."

"Well, no matter, the human heart is full of contradictions. Go on—I am ready now! tell me all you know of this girl's history. Stop! a question first! Where did you make her acquaintance? since you say you are recently from Philadelphia."

"The first night after leaving the last western settlement, I chanced to get lost," I replied, "and found my way into the camp of the Santa Fe traders. She was the first person I spoke to; and her sweet, sad face made such an impression upon my sympathetic heart, that, after some preliminary conversation, I put such questions as drew from her the statement which I will now repeat."

The reader will perceive that I thus avoided speak-

ing of my encounter with Loyola; but I described the man as a villain, and gave my reasons for supposing him not the father of Adele. I told the story of the girl, as she had told it to me; and the Spaniard sat and listened, as one paralyzed—his dark, expressive eyes, which he fastened upon me, and kept there riveted, seeming to pierce my very soul. His countenance, too, during the narration, assumed such a wild, singular expression, that I felt almost terrified, and began to wonder if he were subject to fits of insanity. I cannot better convey an idea of his look and appearance, than to let the reader imagine a person, suddenly surprised and startled, and in the act of gasping for breath, being transformed into a figure of wax. Except some slight twitchings of the muscles around the mouth, a quivering of the lips, and short, gasping respirations, he did not move; but occasionally—as I paused in alarm, thinking he must be ill—dry, husky articulations, seeming to issue from his throat or chest, bade me go on.

For some time after I had finished my story, he kept his eyes fixed upon me, with the same wild expression; and then he sprung up, dashed down his meerschaum, and set off on a run. Cato was near, in the act of kindling a fire; and calling to him, I exclaimed:

"Quick! quick! follow your master! he has lost his senses, and may do himself an injury!"

Cato looked up in surprise; and then turning to me, with a leer, said:

"I guess, mas'er, you is trying to fool dis chile—eh! mas'er?"

"No! no! don't you see he is mad?—look how he runs!—after him, in Heaven's name!"

The tone of my voice, and the anxious expression of my features, convinced the negro more than my words; and starting to his feet, with, "Golly! dat's queer!" he darted after the Spaniard, with the speed of an Indian runner.

I watched the chase with intense anxiety. But it lasted not long; for after running some two or three hundred yards, El Doliente, as he styled himself, suddenly came to a halt, and, facing about, began to retrace his steps at an ordinary walk. He was met by the negro, who of course had to explain why he had followed him, and the two came back together. As they drew near, I was pleased to observe that the features of the Spaniard had resumed their natural expression, though somewhat paler than usual.

"So you thought me mad, my friend?" he said, with a grave smile, as he came up to me.

"I certainly did, sir."

"Well, I was a good deal excited, I must admit; and I felt very strangely—as if I must run to get my breath—a singular way of doing it, doubtless you think."

"But what excited you so, if I may ask? You had a very strange, wild look while I was speaking, which somewhat alarmed me; and I should have stopped, only you insisted upon my going on."

"As to what excited me, perhaps I should say, my own fancy, acted upon by your story; and I bade you go on, because I wished to hear the whole, without interruption. Now tell me—what kind of a looking man was this Loyola?"

"Tall, sinewy, forbidding, and villanous—with very dark skin, a low forehead, large, bushy eye-brows, and black hair and eyes."

"His age?"

"From thirty-five to forty, I should judge."

"He is dead, you say?"

"He was killed by the Indians, at the same time Adele was taken prisoner."

He stood a short time, with his eyes cast down, as if reflecting upon what he had heard, and then abruptly inquired:

"Are you sure the girl's name was Adele?"

"She said she had no remembrance of being called by any other."

"And she was educated at the Convent of Santa Maria, in the interior of Mexico?"

"That was her statement, sir."

He drew a long deep sigh, and mused again.

"Are you certain of the tribe that captured her?" he at length inquired.

"My informant, who was present at the attack, said they were Arrapahoes."

"Had he any particular knowledge of the different tribes?"

"I think not," I answered.

"Then he might easily have been mistaken."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed I—"so he might; and if so, then is the poor girl lost indeed! Strange, I have never thought of this! and now it weakens my hope. Did you not hear the party you met say what tribe attacked them?"

"They thought they were Arrapahoes," he replied, "but were not certain; for it is almost impossible to distinguish one tribe from another in the night, even by those who would recognize their distinctive traits and dress by daylight—at least I have been told so."

"Alas! then, what hope is there for the poor girl?" I sighed. "With any doubt as to her present locality, if living, I could not ask, with any show of reason, for Government troops to be sent to her rescue; and if I did, I should expect my application to be refused."

"Then we must act on our own account," he replied.

"*We?*" said I, inquiringly.

"Yes! you have awakened my interest in the girl—and, if living, I am determined she shall be found and rescued. If money can procure sufficient aid to render an expedition in quest of her comparatively safe, I have enough of that, and will use it for that purpose."

"Say you so?" cried I, springing up and grasping his hand. "God bless you for the noble resolve!"

CHAPTER XVII.

REJOIN MY FRIEND.

THE more I saw of my new acquaintance, the better I liked him; and, all things being taken into consideration, I looked upon the event as fortunate which had brought us together. If my gallant steed had not borne me to a throne, as did the steed of Mazeppa, he had at least assisted me in the accomplishment of one great object I had in view, by placing me in a position to come in contact with one who could and would materially aid me, and for this I humbly and sincerely thanked Providence.

Juan El Doliente was a man of somewhat remarkable parts. Learned in books, in the study of nature and art, and the ways of mankind—a gentleman, a scholar, and a traveler who had visited almost every portion of the habitable globe—he could converse on every subject with an ease and freedom that was truly fascinating; while his reflective, philosophical, satirical, and humorous modes of expression—sometimes all commingling, as it were, in a single sentence—gave continual zest to everything that passed his lips, and rendered him, without exception, the most delightful and brilliant conversationalist I have ever seen.

We spent the day in company, removing our camp to the point where the Santa Fe Trail crossed the Pawnee Fork, so as to intercept the military train, which we expected would make its appearance before night. Botter came in about noon, bringing the most delicious portions of an antelope which he had shot; and on this we had a regular feast—El Doliente furnishing salt, and Cato making us a cake of corn meal, which had been brought from below to be used on special occasions. The Spaniard had six mules—two for himself and servant to ride, and the others to carry his baggage, camp utensils, and whatever else he might find necessary or convenient on his journey—and therefore he had taken a certain amount of provisions, to serve him during a scarcity of game, or to vary the regular hunters' fare of meat alone.

I was in hopes El Doliente would feel in the mood to give me a sketch of his life during the day—for I was quite curious to learn something of his history—but he made no further allusion to the subject; and I, not wishing to be thought inquisitive, made no inquiry. He talked much of Adele, and asked a hundred questions concerning her, many of which I could not answer, and seemed much distressed at her hard fortune—more so, I thought, than could naturally result from mere sympathy for the sufferings of one never seen, and supposed to be an unknown, or unheard of stranger. He inquired about her height, her size, her *tout ensemble*, the color of her hair and eyes, the peculiarity of her features, and even the expres-

sion of her countenance, when in repose and when animated. At last, recurring to his excited manner, while telling him the history of the girl, and taking all his questions into consideration, I inquired:

"Have you fallen in love with this Adele, from my description of her? or do you fancy you really know who she is?"

"Perhaps neither," he replied, evasively; "at least I shall not be your rival for her hand."

"Why, you must not suppose me her suitor," I replied, with a laugh.

"Do you not love her?" he asked, quickly.

"Really, I have had so little experience in matters of the heart, that I cannot decide in my own mind whether I do or not. But grant I do love her, it does not follow I shall wish to marry her, even if I succeed in restoring her to life and liberty."

"You would attempt nothing dishonorable?" he quickly demanded, a dark shade of suspicion, or distrust, passing quickly, over his features.

"Being a stranger," returned I, rather coolly, "I shall permit you to ask that question, without taking mortal offence thereat; but had you known me for years, instead of hours, doubtless you would have thought twice before putting it in such a serious mood."

"Forgive me!" he rejoined, grasping my hand; "I *do* know you. I have already penetrated into your very soul; and I am chagrined that I allowed

my lips to speak without proper reflection! Pray forget the hasty words!"

"They are forgotten," said I, cordially returning the pressure of his hand.

It continued to rain till toward night, and then cleared up, with a chilling breeze from the west—a breeze that seemed to have passed over icy mountains on its journey. The extremes of heat and cold, in midsummer, are not among the least remarkable features of the Grand Prairies. You may retire at night, almost panting, as you inhale and exhale the close, sultry air, and, in less than six hours, require thick blankets and a fire to render you comfortable. The cause of these changes is easily explained. The high mountain peaks to the westward are perpetually covered with snow and ice; and when the current of air sets in from this direction, it takes a wintry coldness to the plains below; while a breeze from the south brings the breath of the tropics; and without either of these currents, a summer sun, pouring down upon a flat, sandy surface, generates a heat that is almost unbearable, and which only a mountain wind can dissipate.

Before night, I was delighted to perceive the command of Lieutenant Parker arrive on the opposite bank of the stream; but the creek was too high and turbulent to admit of any one crossing; though so anxious was I to see Varney, and assure him of my safety, that I think I should have attempted to swim

it, had not El Doliente and Botter interfered to prevent me.

"I insist you do not make the trial!" said the Spaniard, in a positive tone; "for I will not stand idly by and see you throw your life away."

"But I am a good swimmer," I replied, "and I think I could reach the opposite shore without much difficulty."

"You've got the nine lives to the cat," said Sam; "and hyer's what's said it afore; but ef you'd got fifty more, you'd want 'em all into that thar drink, or else I'm a —— old woodchuck—chaw me! Augh!"

I did not make the attempt—nor did any one else that night—and so Varney and I still remained apart, though not more than three hundred yards divided us. On the following morning, the stream not having subsided any during the night, Lieutenant Parker ordered a raft to be constructed; but it was not till late in the afternoon that it was considered launched and ready for a cargo; and as there was now only sufficient daylight for one passage back and forth, it was resolved to defer the transportation to another day. As a matter of course, my friend and I remained another night apart, and I keenly felt the disappointment of not seeing one who was all this time mourning me as dead.

On the second morning, the transportation began about sunrise; and when the raft returned, after taking over the first freight, I returned with it, to the astonishment of all who saw me. Before I reached

Varney, some one informed him that I was alive, and well, and had returned; and he came running forward to meet me, almost doubting his senses. The next minute, with the exclamation, "Great God! it is true!" he threw himself upon my neck, and fainted in my arms.

I pass over the congratulations which I received from all parties, who looked upon me as one from the dead—nor did their astonishment cease when they heard the story of my thrilling adventures. From that moment I became a sort of lion among men who might, in one sense, be said to have hair-breadth escapes for a pastime; but besides the startling facts in my case, there was a wild, romantic interest attached to them, which bore off the palm.

Two men had been killed in the fight, and one or two others slightly wounded; but it was supposed the Indians had lost some fifteen or twenty of their party —though the number could not be accurately ascertained, as they took care to bear off their dead and wounded, with only a few exceptions. Our party had also lost several horses—but Varney's and mine were safe.

Considering the stormy weather, and his grief at my supposed death, Varney had suffered less in health, during my absence, than might have been expected; and my return so raised his spirits, that for several days he seemed to forget his physical ailments altogether; but after that his system took a sudden reaction, and he began to decline so rapidly that I

feared he would not reach Bent's Fort alive. From being able to ride his horse for six or eight hours at a time, he soon became so weak and prostrated that he could not sit up without support, and was obliged to keep to his rude bed in the jolting wagon. His cough grew more and more troublesome, keeping him awake the greater part of the night, exhausting all his vital forces, and leaving him too weak to speak aloud till after sleep. I did all I could to render his situation, not comfortable, but bearable; and looking to death as his only relief, I almost wished for the hour when he would be at rest.

After passing Pawnee Fork, our route lay along the valley of the Arkansas. Millions of buffaloes now surrounded us; and often, as far as the eye could reach, we saw nothing else. Occasionally we espied small bands of wild horses—but they never suffered us to approach very near them. The deer, the elk, and the antelope, sometimes diversified the scene; but the buffalo seemed lord of the domain—attended by his enemy, the wolf—which, though apparently on friendly terms, never failed to take advantage of the misfortunes of his good-natured, indulgent neighbor. There is a species of wolf that always accompanies the buffalo, to prey upon the disabled and young; but the nobler animal, so far as I could discover, has no fear of his sneaking, insiduous, blood-thirsty foe, and no suspicion of his design, till too late to save himself from his cruel fangs.

The remainder of our journey was not without inci-

dents, but none of sufficient interest to deserve special notice. Several of the men fell sick on the route—two died, and were buried on the way—and I at one time suffered severely from an attack of bilious colic; but my disease yielded to medical treatment, and I was confined only one day to the wagon, which bore along the wasted form of my suffering friend. El Doliente, his servant, and Botter accompanied the military train; and on the last day of June, 18—, our eyes were greeted with the waving of the stars and stripes above the walls of that wilderness stronghold known as Bent's Fort.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PARTING AT BENT'S.

BENT'S FORT stands on the left bank of the Arkansas, near the stream, which here flows over a pebbly bottom, and is easily forded, the water seldom being over two feet in depth. The fort itself, is a large, square building, constructed of the Mexican adobes, or sun-dried bricks. It is flanked by circular bastions, loop-holed for musketry, and is entered through a large gate, which opens upon a corral or yard. Fronting upon this inner court, are the dwellings, rooms, shops, offices, stables, etc., of the different occupants of the station.

Great is the variety of character to be found in one of these western fortresses; for in this respect they are much alike—from the Yellow Stone to the Gila—from the Missouri to the Columbia. Being the trading posts of whites and Indians, they often present a curious mixture of races. Here, in a group of twenty, you will not unfrequently find an American, an Englishman, a German, a Spaniard, a Frenchman, a Mexican, an African, and Indians from different tribes; and of these whites—unless Government troops, with perhaps an occasional traveler—nine-tenths will be traders, trappers, hunters, teamsters and guides—always excepting, of course, the parties of emigrants halting on their way to and from more distant regions.

Many of these whites, too, these mountaineers, are but little removed from savages—having been all their lives in the wilderness, away from the refinements of civilized society—and, as a natural consequence, if they marry at all, they generally find them Indian wives; and if they settle, select some well known trading post, and pass the remainder of their days afar from their native soil and beyond the reach of law. I saw numbers here who had Indian wives, and appeared to be contented and happy—many of their children being bright, active, and beautiful in form and feature.

On arriving at this station, I immediately made the best provision I could for poor Varney. During the last few days of our journey, he had regained a little strength, so that he could walk a short distance, and

sit up for an hour or two at a time; but no one who saw him, believed he would live to reach the mountains, which were still many leagues distant. He met kindness and sympathy from every quarter, and I had no difficulty in procuring him the best accommodations which the station afforded; and I also secured him a faithful attendant, in the person of a half-breed, who promised not to leave him till his health should be restored or death should end the scene. My reasons for this course of proceeding, together with some matters of interest to the reader, and the disposition I was about to make of myself, will be gathered from the following conversation, which took place between Varney and myself about a week after our arrival at the fort.

The room assigned to Varney was small, but comfortable. It contained a good bed, a deal table, a couple of chairs, and had chintz curtains to its single window, which, together with the door, looked out upon the corral. These little things, trifling in themselves, gave the apartment a cheerful appearance; and this, I think, is seldom without its effect upon the occupant, especially if he is suffering from a disease which at times causes him great depression of spirits. It was not without its effect, I am certain, upon my friend, who seemed to brighten a little every day, and gradually regain the hope he had recently lost. It was to this room I repaired one night, about nine o'clock. I found Varney in bed, expecting me, with a lamp burning upon the table. I drew up

a chair to his side, sat down, and took his thin hand in mine; but it was perhaps a minute ere either of us broke the solemn silence.

"So," he said at length, with a deep sigh, and in a tremulous tone—"the hour I have so long dreaded has come at last—the hour in which we must part, perhaps to meet no more on earth!"

"Let us hope otherwise, my dear friend—let us hope otherwise!" said I; "we should never despair of the possible!"

"No, Roland, I will not wholly despair; and though this separation is painful to me, I will try and bear it like a man—trusting in God—for I think it is for the best."

"Ah! my dear friend, it gives me joy to hear you speak thus," said I; "for I have all along been afraid you would not be able to take leave of me with anything like composure."

"Nor should I now, Roland, had I not in a great measure prepared myself for the trial; and did not my comparatively comfortable situation here—even here, in the wilderness—render me better able to bear the parting than at any time since our first meeting."

"And I can the better leave you," said I, "that I feel assured you will be well cared for, and receive every attention and kindness which your situation demands. All I have spoken with here, deeply sympathize with you, and there seems to be one universal wish for your recovery. Besides, your attendant,

Panto, the half-breed—recommended to me by Bent himself, as kind and faithful—has already formed a strong attachment to you—and, if you go to the mountains, will go with you. As a hunter and guide he has few superiors. He knows the ground—is well acquainted with Indian wiles and stratagems—is companionable and prudent—and can serve you bet ter than I could."

"But can never take your place in my heart, for all that," sighed Varney. "However, it is well; and with the exception of losing you, I know not that it could be better arranged. Two weeks ago I had no hope of reaching the mountains; I was looking for death; but now I am so much improved, that I trust a couple of weeks more will again see me on my way; so let me thank God for the blessings I have, and look on the bright, rather than on the dark, side of the picture."

"And it is possible, ere two weeks expire, I may rejoin you," I replied.

"If I could only be assured of that, I should be happy; but you will not return in two weeks, Roland; though I pray God you may some time return, and find your journey has not been made in vain! All is arranged, I suppose, for your departure?"

"Yes—we leave to-morrow at the break of day; and, thanks to the noble Spaniard, we have a strong party of experienced men, all well armed and well mounted."

"How many do you number?

"Fourteen in all, including the negro, and two Indians who will act as guides and interpreters."

"And where do you expect to find this Arrapahoe village?"

"That we cannot say, as this is the season when they are continually on the move. Two weeks ago, I understand, the grand village was within fifty miles of here—now it may be two hundred distant—we must search for it."

"And you are not sure the girl is their prisoner after all?"

"Alas! no—would I knew even that!"

"You are still resolved, I suppose, to try mild measures first?"

"Yes, we shall take three mules, loaded with such articles as Indians prize; and if we find the girl and her companion, we shall endeavour to purchase them; but if we fail to get possession of them peaceably, let their captors beware of blows!"

"But fourteen is a small number to attack a strong, warlike tribe!"

"What we lack in numbers we must make up in valor. But I do not apprehend we shall come to strife; for Indians, everywhere, hold their female prisoners at *some* price, and we are prepared to pay even a high ransom."

"And does this noble Spaniard bear all the expense of the expedition?"

"Nearly so. He would have taken the whole expense upon himself; but I insisted on fitting out Bot-

ter, and paying him; and nothing but want of means prevented my claiming the right to pay at least half of all the rest. As it is, I am forced to content myself with the intention of reimbursing him after my return to the States—though he has positively declared he will never accept a single coin from me for such a purpose. We shall see."

"What a noble, generous soul!"

"He is indeed, Alfred—a man among a million."

"And you are well mated, Roland."

"Thank you for the compliment."

"Rather thank God for the fact, my friend," said Varney, earnestly. "How soldom it is," he continued, reflectively, "that we find a human being who acts for the good of others, without some motive of self being at the bottom."

"There may be none entirely devoid of self," I rejoined; "but there are a few who, when compared with the many, appear so—the distinction between them and the generality of mankind is so marked—the difference so great. But a word of yourself. You have improved so much during the last few days, that I trust, as you say, a couple of weeks will see you able to resume your journey; but I would advise you not to set out till you feel strong enough to ride at least twenty miles a day; and at that rate you will soon reach La Puebla de San Carlos, whence you can gain the mountain heights, in the vicinity of Pike's Peak, with very little difficulty. I suppose, if you

live, it is your design to spend the winter in this quarter?"

"Yes, my friend, such is my hope."

"Well, if I come back from this expedition, it shall be my care to visit you ere I return to the States."

"Say you so!" cried Varney, eagerly. "Oh! the very idea gives me joy! Oh! Roland, if I could have you with me, and regain my health, I should be the happiest mortal living! What a delightful time we could have in hunting along the valleys of the mountain streams—where, I am told, game of all kinds can be found in abundance, from the buffalo to the coyote—including deer, elk, antelope, bears, wolves, and mountain goats. But the dream—and it is a dream—is too bright for a reality. It is your intention to return in the fall, and I would not persuade you to remain longer away from those who love you, and have the first claim upon you. But you will see me again—promise me that!"

"Providence permitting, I certainly will, Alfred; and though I will make no promise of remaining with you for any length of time, yet we will talk over the past, and speculate on the future; and perhaps your bright dream, as you term it, may not prove all a dream. Take care of yourself, my dear friend—be ever cautious and never rash—and always remember your life is valuable to more than yourself."

"It is sweet to think so!" said Varney, grasping

my hand, while tears filled his eyes; "it is sweet to think that when we die we shall be mourned!"

"And you would be sadly mourned, by two at least, Alfred—by him who now stands beside you, and by her who is far away."

"I believe it, Roland—God bless you both—I believe it!" returned Varney, so stirred with emotion that he could scarcely articulate the words "And pray take the advice you have given me, to yourself, my dear friend! for you will not perish unwept; and you—pardon me, Roland! you are more rash than I—and you are about to start on a perilous expedition. I sincerely pray you may be successful; for aside from an earnest desire that these poor prisoners may be reclaimed, I know success would render you happy, and your happiness lies at my heart."

We conversed a few minutes longer; and then, with a melancholy depression of spirits—for it was very uncertain if we should ever meet again—I said, in an unsteady tone:

"And now, Alfred, it only remains for me to bid you farewell."

"Must we then part?" cried Varney, with a flood of tears.

"It is even so," said I, with dim eyes and quivering lips. "It is getting late—I have some matters to arrange before I sleep—and I shall leave too early to see you in the morning. Let us hope all may turn out as we could wish; and we must remember, that the same Power which has preserved us during our

perils, is around us still; and that we cannot perish, except it be by the will of Him who gave us life. Trust in God, my dear Alfred, and hope! Farewell!"

"God bless and preserve you!" he rather gasped than said. "Farewell, my friend—farewell!"

In an instant we were locked in each others arms; and for perhaps a minute we stood sobbing, but without speaking another word. Then gently disengaging his arms, I laid Varney carefully on the bed, and rushed from the apartment, feeling as if stifled for the want of air. So we parted.

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CHAPTER XIX.

THE EXPEDITION.

It wanted more than an hour of day, when I arose, from an unrefreshing sleep, and found my way into the corral. All was quiet—no one was yet stirring. The night was clear and serene, and the moon, now near its full, and far toward the west, threw its silvery light against the walls of the fortress, and a portion of its rays just kissed the ground on the eastern side of the court. In the blue concave above, a few bright stars were visible; and fixing my eyes upon these, I stood and wondered if either would be my home, when my spirit should part from its mortal

tenement and wing its flight into the realms of eternity.

And when would that event occur? Would it be soon? or had I many years of earthly pilgrimage, earthly joys and sorrows, before me? Who should say? What of that mysterious future, which now lay before me as a wall of darkness, into which no human sight might penetrate? I was about to set out on an expedition of peril, to rescue one sweet being who occupied my thoughts by night and by day. Yes—disguise the matter as I might, even almost to the deceiving of myself—my mind continually evoked the image of the sweet, lovely Adele as I had seen her; and her voice of silvery sweetness was ever ringing in my soul in sad and plaintive tones. She seemed to conjure me, by all that is sacred and holy in human sympathy, to come to her aid. And I was going—was even now on the point of departure. I had already bidden my bosom friend farewell, and experienced a painful separation, that I might fly to her rescue. Yes, I was going. But whither? and to what end? I was going—but should I ever return? Should I find and save her, and return happy in the knowledge that to me she owed her deliverance? Or should painful disappointments greet me, and perils end in death, and my body lie lonely in an unknown grave, afar from my native land, my kindred, and my friends? The future held all; the result was in the future; but who, save Him who is past, present, and to come,

could look beyond the veil, and say what destiny was there marked out for Roland Rivers?

While I stood lost in thought, a hand lightly touched my shoulder. I turned, and encountered Juan El Doliente.

"You are up betimes, my friend," he said.

"I could not sleep," I replied. "I last night took a solemn leave of Alfred Varney, and the parting was not without its effect upon my nervous system. And add to this, my fancy would perforce run before me into the future, and endeavor to reveal the result of this expedition."

"And with what success?"

"None to rely on. Hope says we may succeed—Fear says we may fail."

"I have had a singular dream on this very subject," said El Doliente, thoughtfully; "a dream, bright, beautiful, ecstatic, glorious! I am not a credulous believer in dreams as omens; but there was something about this resembling rather a prophet's vision than a wandering fancy, and it made me so very, very happy. It is possible for it to be fulfilled, exactly as I beheld it; and God grant it may be fulfilled, even though it now seems as if its realization would drive me mad with joy."

"May I know the dream?"

"If it be fulfilled, yes—but not now."

"Hello, boys!" exclaimed the voice of Sam at this moment. "I thought as how old One-Eyed war the fust nigger up; but I sees I aint—chaw me! Wall,

Cap'en, (a title bestowed upon the Spaniard, as the leader of the expedition,) I spose we're off in a jiffy, hey?"

"It is my wish to be on the way by daylight," replied El Doliente.

"Them's 'em!" said Botter, taking his way to the stables, whither we followed, to see that our animals were properly cared for.

In a few minutes, one after another of our party assembled in the corral, and then we all became busy with our preparations for an early start. The mules were brought out and packed by a Mexican who was to have charge of them during the expedition; and as the process of mule packing may be interesting to the uninitiated, I will give a brief description of it in this place.

It is well known that the mule is the most stubborn of all animals; and to manage him well, requires no little art and experience, to say nothing of a vast amount of patience. True, Varney and I had had no difficulty with ours; but this was rather the exception than the rule, and those of the trappers were exceptions also; but we had witnessed some rather trying and ludicrous scenes, and, in western parlance, had heard some "pretty tall swearing," occasioned by the freaks of this intractable quadruped. But wilful, wayward, and stubborn as this animal is, it can be mastered and brought under due subjection; the means, however, become almost a science, which none better understand than your true Mexican muleteer—

who, in catching, packing, driving, and unpacking, flourishes in the full glory of his ambition. If the mule, from high feed and idleness, takes it into his head to become refractory, on being required to resume his labors, as was the case with one of El Doliente's, the lasso of the muleteer immediately tightens around his neck, and he is instantly brought to the ground, and choked into the belief that he is no longer his own master. The moment he is subdued, he is permitted to rise; and if about to be packed, a blind is thrown over his eyes; and then the saddle-cloth, with a thick pad of stuffed leather, in shape like an open book, is placed upon his back, and strapped down by a broad belt, which is drawn so tight, with the strength of two men, one on either side of the animal, as to cause the latter to bellow with pain; and to one who sees it done for the first time, it appears as if the beast were about to be cut in two. This, however, is a necessary proceeding—for it prevents chafing, and causes the mule to travel with more ease. On this saddle is placed the pack, containing the articles to be transported, weighing anywhere between fifty and four hundred pounds; and this is lashed on by a rope, passing tightly around the beast, and is covered by a square oil-cloth, or matting, to protect the whole from the rain.

Our mulada consisted of three of these animals—one packed with provisions, camp utensils, and sundries, and the two others with blankets, knives, ammunition, and trinkets for Indian trade. Neither of

the three were heavily laden—for it was our design to travel with some speed—and each man, well armed and equipped, was mounted on a strong, fleet horse.

As daylight fairly absorbed the silvery rays of the declining moon, we rode through the gate at Bent's Fort, a picturesque looking party of fourteen, with a crowd of spectators, among whom was Lieutenant Parker, wishing us God speed and a happy termination to our hazardous undertaking. Our party consisted of El Doliente and his servant Cato, two Mexicans, two Indians, three American mountaineers, three French *voyageurs*, Botter, and myself; and though we were of mixed races, care had been taken to get men of experience and undoubted courage.

We shaped our course to the northward, and by noon we had, to the best of our judgment, put some fifteen or twenty miles between us and Bent's, notwithstanding the mules had several times proved refractory, one of them kicking and plunging till he relieved himself of his pack, which had to be again put on, the whole causing at least an hour's delay.

We were now once more on the broad prairie, but not on the buffalo range of the present season, for not one of these animals was in sight. We saw a few antelopes; but they were too wild to come within rifle range; and so we made our noonday meal of dried meat, and a small allowance of dry corn-bread, which we had brought with us, washing the whole down with some brackish water, which we procured from a slimy pool—the first water, in fact, we had seen

since within five miles of the station. We had no shade, for there was not a tree in sight, and the bright sun poured down upon us its piercing rays of heat, with scarcely a ruffle of the air to relieve us. Our animals appeared to suffer as much as ourselves; and having drank in turn, and drained the pool of its unwholesome contents, without their thirst being quenched, and some of them showing little disposition to feed, we thought it best to remount and push on till we could find a suitable place for our night's encampment.

The view before us was now monotonous in the extreme. A flat, sandy, arid plain stretched away to the horizon, in almost every direction, bearing only a few sage bushes, and the short, brown, crisped-looking buffalo grass, so sparsely planted as to give nothing of an ordinary turf-like appearance to the soil. Not a tree, not a bush, not a stream was in sight—the earth seemed parched—and the hot rays of the sun, descending and reflecting, almost scorched and stifled us.

We advanced about ten miles further, shaping our course more to the eastward, when we came upon several holes containing water; and fearing we might fare worse, if we sought anything better, we encamped here for the night. Soon after turning our animals loose, Botter espied some three or four antelopes, far in the distance; and being the first to discover them, he said he should claim them as his meat; by which he meant, that no other hunter of the party—which

was already divided into three or four messes—should go in quest of them; but if they wanted game for their supper, they must seek it elsewhere for themselves.

"Freshwater," he said to me, "you're some to deer, you is, and this hyer old coon got a good wet on't to Bent's; but what d'ye think of them thar skeery critters yonder, hey? D'ye think you could fotch one, boy—hey?"

"If I could get near enough, perhaps I might."

"If they'd only stand till you got up to 'em, hey?"

"A hundred yards might do, Sam, bad shot as you think me."

"Wall, I'd like to knock over two; and so 'spose you kim along, and twig old one-eyed coax 'em up to shooting distance."

I assented, and we set off at once—though I did not understand what he meant by coaxing so wild and timid an animal as the antelope. We made a circuit, so as to get to the leeward of them, that the slight breeze now stirring might not betray us by our scent; for so acute is the sense of smell in nearly all wild animals, that it is almost impossible to approach the more timid to the windward within rifle range. Having got the breeze in our faces, we advanced slowly and cautiously, till we reached a thick cluster of sage bushes, distant from where the animals were feeding some three hundred yards.

"Now," said Sam, "ef everything goes right, we'll

hev decent meat inside of us to sleep on, ooy—you kin gamble on to that! Lay down, and keep yourself quiet as a nigger stealing corn."

"But we cannot shoot them from here?"

"Yes, we kin, hoss!"

"Well, if you can, blaze away; but as for myself, I fancy I have too much good sense to waste my powder upon an antelope at three hundred yards."

"I'll tell you what, Freshwater," pursued Botter, "old One-Eyed Sam 'll gamble on to it—chaw me! This hyer nigger 'll jest bet you a pound of 'bacca that he'll throw one of them critters from this hyer cache afore sundown."

"Done!" said I—"fire away!"

"Not yet—nary once—not so green. I'll hev to fotch 'em up nigher. But a bet's a bet, you know—else what makes parsimmons pucker? Augh!"

"Certainly, a bet is a bet; and you must shoot one of those antelopes from here, or lose."

"Expect."

"I shall be happy to see you do it."

"Lay low then, and twig this hyer old beaver."

As he spoke, Sam produced a strip of a red blanket, which he proceeded to fasten to the end of his wiping-stick, and then elevate above his head and wave to and fro. It was almost instantly perceived by the antelopes—which, to my surprise, instead of running away, took a long, steady look at it, and then began to approach us, slowly and cautiously.

"Them thar antes," said Botter, as he lay on his

back, chuckling at the success of his stratagem and my surprise, "has got more curiosity nor any other critter I knows on, 'cept 'tis a woman; and she beats the hind sights off o' the d—l; ef she don't, why does dogs bark? Augh! Lay low thar; they musn't see you, or they'll quit to once; for no matter how nice you look to your gal, you're no beauty to them—chaw me! Yes! ye see, they twig this hyer old rag, and they don't know what to make on't, and so they're a kimming to see; and when they has seed, I 'spect one on 'em to stay to meat; and ef you kin shoot to sixty yard, plum center, may be two on 'em won't travel no furder. Augh!"

"And they are really approaching us from curiosity?" said I.

"They aint doing nothing else, Freshwater."

The whole proceeding was full of novelty to me, for it was my first acquaintance with the hunter's stratagem for luring the timid antelope to his destruction. Slowly the animals approached us, stopping occasionally to consider the danger of advancing toward an object which had so strong a hold upon their curiosity, but always ending their cogitations with a fresh resolve to make a closer inspection. Meantime Botter had stuck one end of the wiping-stick into the ground, and brought his rifle into range, so that he could sight and fire at a moment's notice.

"Fix your shooting iron, Freshwater," he said, "and see what you kin do fur your living. You is good to a hundred yard, you say, and they aint much

furder off nor that; but as long as they don't git skeered, we'll let 'em kim up powerful nigh. D'ye see that chap with a white spot over his nose?"

"I think I do."

"Wall, he's the fattest, and he's my meat, you kin gamble on to that."

"I have, you know—do not forget the pound of tobacco."

"Me forgit?—nary once—chaw me. 'Spect you'll be more likely to do that nor this hyer coon; but ef you does, I'll ax you for't—don't be afeard."

"You talk as if you had already won."

"Thar—hush now—keep quiet; pick out your critter, but don't take mine. They ain't more'n seventy-five yard, and this hyer old beaver is gitting a desperate hanker for some of thar meat. Got your sight plum center?"

"One moment! There—I am ready."

"Let her rip, hoss."

We fired together, and had the pleasure of seeing two of the animals fall. I was for springing up and rushing forward, to make assurance doubly sure—but Sam restrained me.

"Hold on a bit, and lay low, Freshwater—the fun aint over yit. You done well for a greenhorn—chaw me; but thar's a smart chance left—don't you see? Them fellers as fell can't run away, and you see the others is looking on and wondering what it's all about. Load up, boy—load up—and we'll throw a couple more, and that'll gin the whole camp some'at to chaw."

What Sam said, to my surprise, I saw was true. We had killed, or mortally wounded, two of the animals; and the others, some five or six in number, instead of running away, as I had supposed they instantly would, had gathered around their fallen companions, and were evidently wondering at the cause of their prostration. We reloaded our rifles, keeping our horizontal position on the ground, and, at a given signal, fired together again, and killed two more. The others now took fright, and disappeared with the fleetness of the grey-hound.

"This hyer one-eyed old nigger ain't a-gwine to forgit the bacca, Freshwater!" said Sam, as we returned to camp. "No, I ain't—chaw me—wagh! hagh! wagh!"

CHAPTER XX.

TAKEN PRISONER.

For three days we continued our journey without any incidents worthy of note; but on the fourth day we met a small party of Pawnees; from whom we learned, through our Indian interpreters, that the big village of the Arrapahoes was supposed to be somewhere in the vicinity of Platte River—at least a hundred, perhaps a hundred and fifty, miles from where we now were. This was not the most agreeable news, as we had hoped to find them somewhere about

the Smoky Hill Fork; but there was only one thing to be done under the circumstances, and that was to push on, as rapidly as possible, till we should discover them.

On the sixth night from leaving Bent's Fort, we encamped in a beautiful grove of ash, maple and cottonwood, which shaded the banks of a tributary of the Republican Fork. We had passed over flat, sandy, almost barren prairies, scarcely seeing a tree or a stream on our route; and therefore the sight of this beautiful grove was refreshing indeed—more especially, as it was filled with birds, whose sweet songs enlivened the scene. Near us was a shallow stream, flowing over a sandy bed; and on either side, the grand solemn prairies stretched away as far as the eye could reach. In the valley here was excellent grazing for our weary animals; and as we had succeeded in killing a buffalo, whose nutritious flesh was now before us, we were in good spirits; and around our fires that night, as we toasted and ate our meat, washing it down with pure water, or coffee, we voted to name the place Camp Delightful.

"It's a purty name enough," said Botter, in his characteristic way—as, having filled himself, he lighted his pipe at the fire, and threw out smoke like a miniature volcano; "yes, it's a purty name enough, is Camp Delightful; but when this hyer old beaver seed this spot afore, he had some'at to make him remember it without putting sich a fixing to it—ef he hadn't, why does fishes swim. Augh!"

"So, my friend, you have been here before?" said El Doliente, inquiringly.

"Wall I has, hoss; and ef I didn't see some red niggers that thar night, then chaw me up fur a liar! Augh!"

As he said this emphatically, he drew the attention of the whole party, and El Doliente rejoined.

"Suppose you tell us the story; it will serve to while away the time till our pipes are all smoked out."

"What does *you* say to that thar, Ebony?" inquired Sam, turning to the negro, who had edged his way up as near the old trapper as he considered prudent.

"Me, mas'er?" returned Cato, in surprise, at being thus appealed to.

"Yes, you've got a tongue into your head as red as a biled lobster; and what's the use on't ef you don't say nothing? Your pealed-inyun eyes shows you're in fur the gist on't—else why was niggers made? So what d'ye say now?—blurt her out and don't chaw! Augh!"

Cato looked inquiringly at his master, who said, with a laugh:

"The *white* gentleman (nodding to Sam) would like to know if you wish to hear his story?"

"Golly! if dat's it, den dis chile say yes, sah!" replied Cato, with a grin.

"In course that's it," pursued Sam; "and the man's a —— fool as thinks it aint."

"We all verree mushe like you tell him to hear," said one of the French voyageurs.

"Wall, squat around, boys, and hyer goes, plum center," said Sam.

We all formed a half circle around the old trapper, who proceeded to tell us the following thrilling story.

"Me and a chap called Stag-Horn," began Sam, "kim over here one winter, 'bout ten year ago, on our way to the mountains. We started with three muleys; but thar kim along one of the infarnallest snow storms as ever froze ha'r, and every bone on 'em went under, leaving us afoot and clean froze. We had our shooting irons, and we tumbled through the snow, without seeing nary splinter fur a fire, nary once. For two days we tramped without sleeping, with our ha'r froze stiff, and our skins feeling like fishes' scales, which means they didn't feel at all. Augh! Wall, the third day, jest as we was 'gwine to gin in to freezing, and gin the wolves a taste, we kim to a dog town, whar the wind had blowed the snow off, and we burnt powder and got half-a-dozen. We hadn't had nary chaw sence the night afore, and the first two went in without cooking, for we knowed death war about, and felt cantankerous. Arter that, we pulled forward, and got to this spot, jest as the sun war squatting over the icykels of the Rocky.

"'Hyer's wood,' says I to Stag-Horn—for the snow'd drifted and left a bare spot—'and we'll make a fire kim, and feast on dog to-night. Hooray!'

"'Ef we wont, tell me I'm han'some,' says Stag-Horn; and that 'ud been one of the lies, fur he warn't nary beauty, no how.

"Wall, you kin gamble on to it, we fotched a fire, and tuk a thaw; and then the way them thar dog went in, every thing 'cept skin and ha'r, war a caution to old sinners! Hello, nigger! (to Cato) don't grin that thar way, or you'll cut off the top of your head —chaw me!"

"You—you'll 'scuse me—but—but you is so berry funny!" roared Cato.

"Wall, jest open your meat-trap then; but ef you lose your wool, don't say old One-Eyed Sam didn't tell ye better."

Botter now took a long and strong pull at his pipe, and, rolling out a heavy volume of smoke, proceeded:

"Boys, the way me and Stag-Horn sot up to that thar fire, was like to courting a sugar-planter's darter; we fairly hugged it; yes, chaw me up fur a liar ef we did'nt! Augh! Arter we'd got thawed out, so as we felt human, we piled on more wood, and lay down to it, not 'specting ary skunk of a Injun would be so froze fur ha'r as to be out on sich a night —nary one; but we didn't do the infarnal thieves justice; for jest as we'd got asleep—whiz, whiz—bang, bang—kim arrers and bullets right among us, with the tallest screeching and yelling ever a white nigger heerd. Me and Stag-Horn jumped up like mad—me with a ball plum through my left arm, and him with two arrers sticking into his fodder pan; and we went in and throwed two on 'em cold powerful sudden. The rest on 'em kim down on us, with Satan's yells, and this hyer old beaver broke fur

darkness and a snow-bank. I tumbled into a hole, and lay thar, and the devils passed right over me, hunting my ha'r—which they didn't git—no-sir-ee!

"You kin gamble on to it, boys, old One-Eyed Sam had a cool time on't that thar night; but I didn't dar to stir a peg. Afore daylight, I heerd the wolves growling and fighting right nigh, and I knowed some'at was up. Arter it got to be day, I peeped out of my hole, and not seeing nary red nigger no whar, I ventur'd out. Augh! the first sight I seed froze my blood wosser nor the cold; fur thar, right down whar the camp was, lay the bones of Stag-Horn, white and shining, picked clean by the wolves. Says I, 'Sam, you old fool, what's the use of your gwine to the mountains this hyer way, afoot and alone? Ef you've got ary sense, put back;' and you kin gamble on to it, that this hyer nigger made some back'ard tracks, and fotched his skin and bones to Independence, to take a fresh start. That's all. Augh!"

"You certainly have had cause to remember the place," said I.

"Kinder—chaw me!" grunted Sam.

Botter's story was not without its effect upon all who heard it; and the result was, that we picketed our animals close around the camp, and set a double guard. The night, however, passed off without any disturbance; and by daylight we were again in our saddles, laying our course due north. At noon we halted under some trees, on the bank of a wide, shallow stream, which we conjectured to be the Republican

Fork of the Kansas. Here we were overtaken by one of the most terrible thunder-storms it has ever been my fortune to witness. The wind blew a perfect hurricane; the rain fell in torrents; the lightning seemed to set the earth ablaze; and the thunder crashed and roared around us, with a sound that might be likened to the falling of an Alpine avalanche. We considered it too dangerous to remain under the trees; and so we withdrew from the little protection they might have given us, and faced the storm, in all its fury, on the open plain. We had no reason to regret our precaution; for two of the trees, under which we had been sitting, were shivered with lightning before our very eyes, and the horse of Botter was prostrated with the concussion, and lay as if dead.

"Afoot agin, or I'm a wood chuck!" cried Sam, with an oath. "But hyer's a nigger as aint alone!" he added, in the next breath, as, at the moment, all the rest of the animals broke away in a regular stampede.

"You is verree moshe better off as nobody," said one of the French voyageurs, pointing to the old trapper's animal; which not only showed signs of life, but, getting upon its feet, and giving itself a shake, looked around with an air of surprise. "Oui, Monsieur—by gar! ze lightzing sav you hos, and trive ze tam rest to ze whole universe—sacre!"

"You're right, old frog-eater!" laughed Sam. "That thar hoss is one on 'em—ef he aint, chaw me! He stands lightning like a nigger does hot weather."

"It's a critter I'd like to own jest now, being as mine is scattered," said a tall Missourian.

"But you haint got tin enough to buy him," rejoined Botter—"case nobody has. A hoss as stands lightning like him, suits old One-Eyed; and he aint agwine to gin him up to any nigger 'cept death. Augh!"

The storm lasted for two hours; and until its fury was spent, we made no attempt to regain our animals, which were now scattered far and wide over the broad prairie, scarcely any two of them remaining together. This caused a similar division of our party—each man seeking his own—but we agreed to make the spot whence we started the general rendezvous.

Thus it was I gradually became separated from each one of my companions; and at length I found myself about two miles from the starting point, upon a gentle swell of the prairie, where I could overlook a wide stretch of country in every direction. I could occasionally perceive, here and there, one of the company, quite distant—and occasionally, also, one of the strayed animals. To the north, near a small cluster of willows, I fancied I espied my own horse, quietly feeding, and I set off on a run to catch him. As I drew near, I saw, with delight, I had made no mistake—that it was indeed my gallant steed—and for fear of alarming him, I slackened my pace, and approached him slowly.

Suddenly, from a thick grove, on the bank of a creek, some quarter of a mile distant, there burst forth

a small band of mounted Indians, and bore straight down for me with lightning speed. The moment I perceived them, I made a desperate effort to get to my horse before them; and I might, perhaps, have succeeded, had he not taken fright and sprung away from me. The next minute I was surrounded by some fifteen or twenty almost naked, howling Indians, who pranced around me with fiendish delight, seemingly anxious to take me alive. I had my loaded rifle in my hand, and a brace of loaded pistols in my belt, and my first resolve was to sell my life dearly—but a moment's reflection caused me to abandon so desperate a design. I might kill one of the savages—perhaps three—but I knew I should be killed or captured in return; and why exasperate my foes, when, by a different course, I might save my life? Although armed with bows and arrows, they had not as yet made a single shot at me—and this led me to hope their intentions toward me were friendly.

Acting on the impulse of the moment, I dropped the breech of my rifle, and held up an open palm. Instantly each one extended an open palm; and one fine, athletic warrior, riding up to me, struck his breast with dignity, and exclaimed:

"Arrapaho!"

"So," thought I, "I have stumbled upon a portion of the very tribe I was seeking; but I meet them under circumstances which I would were otherwise." The next thought was—"Is Adele their prisoner? and shall I soon behold her sweet, sad face again?"

"Where from?" demanded the warrior, who had just proclaimed himself Arrapaho, and who was in truth a chief of the nation.

His enunciation of the words was guttural; but I was surprised and delighted that he could understand English at all, and I quickly replied:

"I and my companions, who are not far distant, are from Bent's Fort, and we are on our way to seek your nation, to make them some presents."

"Ugh!" grunted the savage. Present much good. Injun like present. Where present?"

"With my friends," I answered.

"Where friends?"

"We encamped away yonder; but my horse having run away, I followed him here alone."

This was the truth, but not the whole truth—for I did not wish the Indians to know the company was scattered, lest they might capture the whole in detail, and get possession of our goods.

A consultation now took place among my captors; and as soon as it ended, two of the party dismounted, deprived me of my weapons, and bound my hands behind my back. They then placed me on a fine horse, in front of a grim savage, who threw an arm around my waist, and dashed away over the plain, accompanied by only one other of the band. The direction taken by those having charge of me, was directly opposite to that which led to Camp Rendezvous; and I conjectured I was being conveyed to the Grand Village, perhaps to undergo a trial and be put

to the tortures. The possibility of such a termination to all my fondest hopes, made me wretched; and I almost regretted that I had not kept to my first resolve of defence, and taken the chances of liberty or death. I asked my guard whither he was bearing me—but he returned no answer. I looked back, and saw the party left behind darting away in a body over the prairie, in the direction of my scattered friends, and doubted not that some of them, perhaps all, would meet with death or captivity. I would have given half of my remaining days, to have had them in a mounted body and been at their head; but fate had made me a helpless prisoner, and it was vain to wish for other fortune.

On, on we dashed for hours, not a word being spoken. Many a long league was passed over, night gradually closed around us, and yet no sign of a halt.

At last we gained the bank of a stream having some high bluffs, and, turning short around these, came upon a pleasant valley, over which was scattered a large Indian village, the different fires flashing their ruddy lights upon the neighboring huts, and upon the grim, dusky, half-naked forms of their owners, who, to my excited senses, appeared rather like spectres from the infernal regions, than human beings of flesh and blood. With loud, triumphant whoops and yells, my guard bore me into the very center of the village, and deposited me on the ground, at the door of a large lodge, which I afterward ascertained belonged to one of the principal chiefs of the nation. Here the

whole village speedily collected around me—men, women, children, dogs and all—and such screeching, yelling, and barking, as then and there greeted me, I pray God it may never be my fortune to hear again.

Hundreds crowded around me, each anxious to have a near inspection of my person; but no one offered me violence, and in a few minutes the tumult subsided. A consultation among the principal chiefs and warriors now took place—at the end of which I was conducted into a lodge near by, thrown upon the ground, and my legs tightly bound. This done, my captors withdrew, and I was left alone to my own unpleasant ruminations and conjectures. What of the future?

CHAPTER XXI.

THE LOST FOUND.

I SHALL make no attempt to describe my feelings, as I lay upon the ground, bound hand and foot, beneath an Indian lodge, the captive of a savage foe. A few hours since, and I was free, and full of hopes and bright anticipations—a few hours hence, and what would be my fate?

While I thus lay pondering, in a painful position, hungry, and almost choking with thirst, a small, slender figure glided into the lodge, and a sweet,

silvery voice, that made my blood leap with a wild thrill, said, in a tone of holy sympathy:

"I pity you, sir, whoever you are! and though a prisoner myself, I have obtained permission to visit you. I cannot release you; but if you are thirsty, I think I may be allowed to bring you a cup of water —and food, perhaps, if you are hungry."

There were firelights outside the lodge; and from one came a ruddy gleam through the open door, and, falling upon the fair visitant, revealed the outlines of form and feature. I could not be mistaken; the senses of hearing and seeing could not both deceive me; to say nothing of that sympathetic, magnetic thrill, which seemed to pass the grosser material of body, to bury itself, as it were, in my very soul! No! I could not be mistaken! It was the being I had seen once to remember ever; it was the being I had mourned as lost; it was the being for whose safety and happiness I had often prayed; it was the being I had sought through difficulty and danger; it was the being whom my wildly beating heart now assured me I loved with a love that would no longer be disguised under the colder term of friendship: in a word, she who now stood before me, in the form of a ministering spirit, speaking her sympathy in the voice of an angel, was Adele Loyola.

My first impulse was to call her by name, and reveal my own; but ere I spoke, the whim seized me to try her first; and disguising my voice, I replied:

"I am very thirsty."

"You shall have water, sir," she said, and disappeared.

In a short time she reappeared, bringing a gourd full of the pure element, which she held to my parched and feverish lips. I drank eagerly, and never in my life had I tasted a draught so refreshing. Had my cup-bearer been old and ugly, I could have loved her for her kindness; could I do less than love the fair, sweet, beautiful being before me?

"I thank you from my heart!" I said; and my voice, made tremulous by emotion, must have convinced her of my sincerity.

"I would I could give you more cause to be thankful, by releasing and setting you free! but this I cannot do," she rejoined. "But here is some food, if you are hungry," she added, producing a kind of wooden platter, containing boiled maize and a piece of cooked meat. "The chiefs have permitted me to bring you this sustenance. Will you eat?"

"I am somewhat hungry," I answered; "but at present my curiosity gets the better of my appetite. Will you permit me to ask you a few questions?"

"I will, sir; but I may soon be called away; so I pray you speak at once, and briefly, that I may have time to place this food to your lips, since you cannot feed yourself."

"You say you are a prisoner here as well as myself?"

"I am, sir!"

"Where were you captured? and how long since?"

"I was captured a few weeks ago, at a place called Turkey Creek. My father and myself belonged to a company trading between Missouri and Santa Fe; and while encamped one night at the place mentioned, the Indians attacked us, and killed my father and several others; and myself, and the wife of an emigrant who was traveling with us, were taken prisoners."

"And is this other lady you speak of still a prisoner with you?"

"No, sir—she was killed the same night."

"Accidentally, or intentionally?"

"She had the misfortune to offend a chief, who buried his tomahawk in her brain."

"Did you witness her death?"

"I knew when it took place; but it was dark, and I did not see the awful deed done."

"How did it affect you?"

"I almost wished it had been myself."

"But how is it that you have so much liberty among such a savage people?"

"It is, perhaps, because a powerful chief has signified his intention of making me his wife; and by treating me with marked favor, even above others of my sex, he hopes to win my regard—so at least he tells me in broken English."

"Indeed!" exclaimed I; and my changed voice nearly betrayed me. "And is it possible you can

consent to become the wife of one of the murderers of your father and friends?"

"Alas! sir, what can I do? I am a poor, helpless girl!" and she burst into tears.

"But you certainly have a choice between the monster and death?"

"Would you have me die by my own hand?"

"No! no! for that, we are told, would entail eternal misery hereafter. I see! unless the savages put you to death, or you escape, you have no choice."

"Oh! would to God I could escape!" she said.

"Do not despair! your friends may even now be seeking you."

"Alas! sir, I have no friends."

"No friends? are you sure? It is hardly possible that one like you can be without friends."

"But I have none, sir, that would seek me here," she replied, in a tone of sadness. "I never knew any relation but my father, and he is dead."

"But surely there must be some one who will not be indifferent to your fate!

"It is possible I may be pitied by some who knew me—but I have no hope that any will seek me here; and even should any venture here, for the purpose of releasing me, you see how vain would be the attempt, while I am surrounded by so many warriors who are enemies of my race!"

"But could not your freedom be purchased?"

"And who will offer to purchase the freedom of a poor, friendless girl?"

'Did you never see any one that would take interest enough in you to do so, if your misfortunes were known to him?"

She hesitated, and at length replied:

"There was one, sir, whom I met under painful circumstances, who did profess warm friendship; but he was a stranger, seen only for a brief hour, and has doubtless forgotten me. I have sometimes hoped he would hear of my fate; though I know not why I should wish him to learn of my misery, since it could not benefit me and might give him pain."

"Permit me to inquire the name of this stranger?"

"It was Roland Rivers, sir."

"Indeed!" said I; "I know him."

"Do you, sir? do you?" she cried, eagerly.

"I do; and it is not a week since I saw him."

"Was he well, sir?"

"At that time he was."

"And where do you think he is now?"

"Somewhere among the Indians, I have reason to believe."

"Oh! sir, not a prisoner, I hope!"

"I cannot say he is not. When I saw him a few days ago, he was on his way, with a small party of armed men, to seek a large and powerful tribe, for the purpose of procuring the release of a female captive, a young and beautiful girl. Ah! good sooth! now I think—perhaps it was you of whom he was in search."

For a short time Adele made no reply, during

which she seemed much agitated. At length she murmured, in a low tone, evidently not intended for my ear:

"God and all holy saints bless and preserve him, wherever he is!" And then she said to me: "Will you let me give you this food now?"

I could maintain my assumed character no longer; but allowing my voice to take its natural tone, I said:

"Adele—do you not know me?"

Instantly she sprung aside, so as to admit the light, and, bending down, peered eagerly into my face.

"Holy Virgin!" she exclaimed; "it is Roland Rivers himself!"

"It is no other, Adele," I replied. "I was on my way, with several others, to effect your release, when, having become separated from my companions, I was surrounded and taken prisoner."

"Oh, Heaven! this is terrible! and I have been the unlucky cause of your misfortune!"

"Let that give you no pain, my dear Adele—for I feel it a kind of pleasure to suffer in your behalf. You must forgive me for not making myself known the moment I recognized you; but I could not resist the desire to know if I still lived in your memory."

"Oh! sir, how *could* I forget you, if I would!" she rejoined, with perfect *naivete;* "you who spoke such words of kindness to one who has had but little kindness to remember! And now to see you here, bound, a prisoner, in the hands of a savage foe, makes me

sick at heart indeed! I was miserable before—I am more miserable now."

"But perhaps I shall soon be free."

"Oh, Mr. Rivers, do you think so?"

"I hope so, Adele—for I have done nothing to excite the animosity of the Indians."

"Why then are you bound and placed here?"

"I cannot say—do you not know?"

"I do not."

"Have you no idea what they intend to do with me?'

"I have not."

"But if they had any design against my life, would they have permitted you to visit me?"

"Indeed, sir, I cannot say—for you are the first prisoner I have seen in their hands since they killed my companion, Mrs. Mason."

"But what do they say of me among themselves? we may judge by that."

"You forget, Mr. Rivers, I do not understand their language."

"Pray call me Roland, Adele—any other name from you sounds too cold and formal. You say you do not understand their language—pray how do you converse with them?"

"Partly by signs; but there are three or four in the village who understand a little English, and can speak a few words. Waralongha, the chief I have mentioned, speaks the English tongue rather plainly—but he is now away."

"Ha!" said I; "the chief of the party that captured me could converse in my native tongue."

"Then you were taken by Waralongha himself," said Adele. "How is it that he sent you here before him? for he has not yet returned."

"I think he and his party went in pursuit of my companions," I replied; and I proceeded to give her a brief account of the whole affair.

"Oh, Roland, I hope your companions will not be made prisoners also!" cried Adele.

"I fear some of them will," said I.

"I think you will be kept here till Waralongha returns," she rejoined.

"And what then?"

"Alas! I do not know. Should your companions resist, and he lose any of his men, I fear your life may be taken in revenge; and should he be unsuccessful in getting your goods into his possession, he may vent his rage on you for that."

"In any event, then, my life is in danger!"

"Alas! I fear so."

"But can I not escape?" I said, in a low whisper; for if there were any who could understand our conversation, I thought it possible they might be within hearing, perhaps listening.

"How, Roland?"

"With your assistance, Adele. But tell me first how you obtained permission to visit me? and why I am left unguarded?"

"You are not unguarded, Roland—would to Heaven

you were! for then I might assist you," she replied. "There are no less than four warriors watching this lodge."

"Indeed! where are they?"

"They are lounging on the earth outside, at no great distance; but are so disposed, that, by the lights of the different fires, they can see completely round your prison."

"But why are you permitted to visit me, and bring me food and drink, since they have seen proper to treat me so roughly, and offer me none?"

"I do not know, unless because you are a prisoner of Waralongha, and they think it might offend him to refuse my request."

"You requested to see me then?"

"Yes! I was one of the crowd that surrounded you, after you were brought in; but I only got near enough to see you were a white man; and I spoke to one who can understand the most simple English words, and requested him to ask leave of the chiefs for me to visit you. He did so, and I came to you as soon as my request was granted. Arguing from this permission, that I should be allowed to bring you food and water, I took the liberty to do so, and so far I have been unmolested and unrestrained; but how much longer this may continue I cannot say; and this reminds me you have not yet eaten: pray let me give you some of this food now, before I am called away."

"I would rather talk than eat, Adele, for the time is precious."

"You can do both," she said, putting some of the frugal fare to my lips. "Eat, Roland, I pray you! I shall feel better to know you have taken sustenance."

I hastily ate a few mouthfuls, took another drink from the gourd, and continued:

"You have been treated well by the Indians?"

"Better, at least, than others of my sex."

"But you are suffering mental torture?"

"Oh! yes, Roland—I would rather die than remain here, the wife of a savage. Great God! what a fate!"

"What a fate indeed!" said I. "I heard of your capture while at Council Grove; and I afterward resolved to set you free, or die in the attempt; and I now fear the attempt will cost me my life. What is to be done? I am here, a more helpless prisoner than yourself even; and I fear my companions are, or will be, overpowered—in which case we shall all be at the mercy of the savages."

"Alas! what is to be done indeed?" cried Adele, wringing her hands.

At this moment a grim-looking savage appeared at the door of the lodge, and made signs to Adele that she must follow him.

"There," she said; "it is as I feared; we must part now, perhaps never to meet again."

"Farewell, and God bless you!" said I. "Keep up your spirits, and hope! all may not be so bad as it seems."

She put her hands to her eyes, as if to restrain her tears, and in a choked and trembling voice murmured:

"Adieu! I will come to you whenever I can. God bless you! God bless you! If it had not been for me, you would not now be here. The heart of the friendless orphan shall ever pray for your deliverance, prosperity, and happiness!"

With this she hurried out, the savage glided away, and I was again alone.

CHAPTER XXII.

FLIGHT AND PURSUIT.

Soon after Adele left me, two Indians came and sat down in the door of the lodge, and for an hour kept up a low, but to me unintelligible, conversation. Then one of them went away; and the other, whistling a large dog to him, stretched himself out, as if to sleep, leaving his canine companion on the watch. Finding my position extremely painful, I now ventured to address the savage, to inquire if a stronger guard could not be put over me, and my aching limbs be freed from their bonds.

He raised his head, looked at me, and saying, "Me no Engles," laid down again.

He added something to the dog, which immediately

took up a position where his eyes could rest upon mine; and there he remained through that long night, growling every time I moved. Well may I call it a long night—for to me it seemed an age—and all the good and evil of my life appeared to come up before the mind for review.

Morning came at last; and with the rising of the sun my guard left me, calling off his dog. Soon after this my angel, for she looked to me like an angel, reappeared.

"Oh! what tortures you must have suffered through the night!" she said, compassionately, her soft eyes filling with tears, as she gazed upon my haggard features and corded limbs.

"Oh! Adele," I replied, "it is Heaven to look upon your sweet face once more! But pray tell me what you have learned concerning me? for this awful suspense is one of the greatest tortures I have to bear."

"Ah! sir, I have learned nothing, except that your fate will be decided when Waralongha returns. Ha! he has come now, I think!" she added, as at the moment a series of loud whoops, from a distance, broke upon the ear. "I will go and see, and return and tell you;" and she hurried out and disappeared.

I lay there for some minutes, listening to the unpleasant noises without, which announced the arrival of a party of warriors, and felt much as I suppose a prisoner must feel awaiting a decision which will set him free or consign him to death. At length Adele

suddenly burst into the lodge, pale and breathless, and exclaimed:

"I fear it is all over with you, my dear friend! Hark! do you not hear those wild cries of Indian women lamenting the loss of some of their friends? I have only seen enough to know that Waralongha has returned with two white prisoners, and three Indian corpses, and the rage of the nation will demand you for a victim. Oh! my God! that I could die for you!"

"You can do better!" cried I, from that strong impulse of the mind which often acts with the force and certainty of instinct. "Quick! cut my cords, and let me take my chance!"

"But surely you cannot escape!"

"I may escape torture, if not death. Oh! Adele, by the love of Heaven, I conjure you to cut these bonds, ere my enemies come upon me!"

"I will," she cried, "if I die for it! One moment! I have no knife—but I just now saw one at the door of an adjoining lodge;" and she darted out.

She was gone but a moment indeed; and as she hurried back to me, and severed the cords that bound my limbs, she fairly gasped out, under the wildest excitement:

"Oh! Roland, perhaps you may escape! Oh, my God! give me strength to speak! The whole village has gone out to meet Waralongha. Only a few old men and women are near you. Some chief or warrior has left his horse, with a Mexican bridle and saddle

upon him, standing only a few rods off. Great God! if you could reach him and escape! Oh! I faint to think! There! there! you are free. Up! quick, and away! and Holy Mary and all the saints protect you!"

"And you, Adele?" returned I, as I hurriedly chafed my limbs, which fortunately were not so benumbed as to be useless.

"Think not of me; but fly! fly! and save yourself, if in God's holy Providence you may be so permitted!"

"But come you with me! you must not, shall not, remain behind!"

"No! no! no! Roland—fly and leave me! for the love of holy angels, fly! I should only be a burden to you; I should only retard your flight; and you would be retaken; and then death by tortures would be your fate. It is your only chance; the whole village of chiefs and warriors will soon be here; do you not hear them coming? And yet you stand! "Oh, God! Roland, if you would not see me sink dead at your very feet, fly, and save your precious life!"

I looked at the slight, slender, beautiful girl before me—dressed much as she was when I first presented her to the reader—her dark hair, now somewhat disarranged, floating around her neck and shoulders—her black eyes, wild and sparkling, fixed beseechingly upon mine—her upturned features picturing forth the full agony of a soul upon the rack of desperate fear

and desperate hope—the contending emotions almost tearing her spirit asunder: I looked at her, I say, as she thus stood before me, and my resolution was instantly taken. We would live or die together—or at least I would not escape alone. The chances were all against us—but Heaven might be on our side. She was small, slight, and light—I was large and strong—and suddenly throwing an arm around her slender waist, I lifted her from the ground, and darted out into the open air.

"This is my answer, dear Adele," I said; "you must go with me; I will not leave you; and if you resist, I shall remain a prisoner. Quick! where is the horse?"

She pointed to where he stood, too much excited to speak; and I darted to his side, bearing my lovely burden with the same ease that I would have borne an infant. I looked around and saw the whole village, with only a few exceptions—men, women, and children—collected in a body, some four or five hundred yards distant, and surrounding the returned warriors, who were marching into the village in Indian state, whooping and howling alternately—this for a loss—that for a triumph. Most of the lodges were between us and them, which concealed our movements and favored our design; while fortunately, their attention was occupied with matters in their immediate vicinity. A decrepit old Indian, in a lodge near, perceived us, and uttered a peculiar yell, intended to alarm his distant friends, and bring them down upon us; but

luckily his lungs were weak, and his voice did not reach far; and ere he had thrice repeated his cry, I was upon the back of as fleet and noble a steed as ever bore man from captivity, with the lovely and half fainting Adele clasped in my arms.

I could scarcely restrain a shout of exultation, as I jerked the reins, and struck the beast upon the flank with the flat of my hand. Unused to such treatment, he reared and plunged, and the next moment was bounding away with a velocity that made my heart leap with hope and joy. But we had scarcely gone twenty yards, when, from several parts of the village, arose those peculiar yells, which told us we were discovered by the aged and infirm who had not gone out to meet the returned warriors; and ere we had advanced a hundred rods, the same fearful cry of discovery came borne to our ears from the more distant crowd of warriors.

"God help us!" I murmured; "it is life or death now!"

As we cleared the last hut, and dashed away toward the west, over the seemingly boundless prairie, I looked back, and saw a great commotion among the excited crowd; and the next moment some five or six mounted warriors burst through the throng, and bore down for us with all speed.

"There, the fiends are after us!" cried I, giving my high spirited steed another blow with my hand, which caused him to bound away with the speed of the rushing wind.

"Holy Virgin, help us! holy saints, help us! Great God, help us!" cried Adele, clinging shudderingly to me. "Oh! Roland—can we—can we escape them?"

"God only knows!" said I, tightening my arm around her waist. "This gallant beast seems fresh, and their animals may be more or less fatigued. They have not gained on us yet," continued I, glancing back, after a few minutes of breathless silence—"nor can I perceive we have gained on them. God help us!"

"He will, Roland—I feel He will!" replied Adele, suddenly turning her sweet, sad face, and soft, dark, speaking eyes up to mine. "Heaven certainly favors us, or we should not be here now. Was not this horse a Providence, my dear friend?"

"It seems so indeed," I answered. "Who could have dreamed, a short half hour since, while I lay a bound prisoner, in the hands of a tribe numbering several hundred warriors, that I should now be mounted and flying from them, and bearing away the captive I came to seek? Who knows, dear Adele, but my very misfortune, as I supposed it to be, was one of the mysterious ways of Providence for your deliverence?"

"Oh, I am unworthy!" she replied—"I will pray."

It was a fearful race—and seems now, as I recall it, rather like a wild, terrible dream, than a reality. On, on, we sped, over the seemingly boundless prairie, with not a hill or tree to obstruct the view, and with our enemies, yelling like fiends, in hot pursuit. For

two long hours we maintained the distance which divided us on setting out, and many a long league now lay between us and the Arrapahoe village. The day was bright—the sun shone clear—and earth and sky would have looked beautiful to our eyes, could we have viewed them in peaceful freedom; and even as it was, with the soft breeze from the west we drank in hope, and felt our hearts beat with returning joy. Oh! how I loved the noble animal beneath us! which neither flagged nor faltered—but strained every nerve to save us—and still sped onward with lightning speed.

The sun was perhaps two hours and a half above the horizon, when, glancing back, for the hundredth time, I fairly shouted:

"Joy! joy! we shall escape! we shall be saved, dear Adele! your prayers are heard!"

"Saved!" she murmured, clasping her hands—"saved!"

"Yes, we are gaining on our pursuers; already their animals begin to falter; while ours seems no more fatigued than if his muscles were of iron."

"And shall we be saved, dear Roland? Oh! what joy! my heart is too full to speak! Oh, God! let the gratitude which fills my soul be my offering to Thee for this unexpected deliverance!"

During the next quarter of an hour, we gained perceptibly on our foes; and at the end of that time, a distance of more than half a mile divided us; and as

every moment increased it, they at length came to a sudden halt and gave up the chase.

"There! see!" cried I—and my heart leaped to my throat for joy; "our boldness and daring, under God, have given us life and liberty!—our foes are turning back."

Adele clasped her hands, and burst into tears, being too deeply affected to utter a single syllable. I now gradually checked the speed of our foaming steed; and, a few miles further on, curbed him down to a quiet walk.

We were still upon the broad, almost barren prairie, with a clear, blue sky overhead, and the bright, warm sun rolling up the heavens in glory. Save a small herd of buffaloes away to our right, our retreating foes already dim in the distance, and a few birds sailing high overhead, apparently bound on a long flight, not a single living object met our view. The prairie, covered with the short, brown, buffalo grass, was almost as level as a floor; and away to the north, away to the south, away to the east, away to the west, as far as the straining eye could reach, it drew its even line against the horizon. The scene was grand, impressive, solemn; and as the first excitement of rejoicing at our escape from captivity and death began to die away, and the mind began to stretch from the present into the future, I shuddered to think what an awful fate might yet be ours. We were alone upon this great desert, afar from the settlement of a white man, in the territory of our enemies, surrounded

by foes, both animal and human, almost helpless as infants, with nothing for defence and protection but our fleet and gallant steed. I had not a single weapon of any kind, and knew not which way to steer to reach the nearest station; and any deviation from the right course, might carry us far beyond, entangle us in new difficulties, and prove fatal at last.

Adele observed the change in my features, as these startling facts and fearful uncertainties pressed upon my mind; and she said, with anxiety:

"You seem troubled, Roland?"

"I am, dear Adele—I am."

"Oh, speak! what is it?"

"We have just made a narrow escape from our foes behind—but what is before us?"

"What do you fear, Roland?"

"Everything. Where are we now? whither shall we go? and how support life?"

"Ah! what do you mean?"

"I do not wish to startle or alarm you, Adele; but I must tell you the painful fact, that I have not a single weapon; even the knife with which you cut my cords, was forgotten in my haste."

"Well, we may not henceforth be menaced by man or beast."

"There is a danger greater still, dear Adele."

"Indeed, Roland—what is it?"

"Starvation!"

"Ah! I did not think of that."

"How are we to live?" I cried, despondingly,

"we may starve in sight of game; and even were it killed, we have nothing with which to cut the flesh asunder, and therefore could not use it."

"It is dreadful!" returned Adele, with a shudder. But the next moment she added, with a kind of cheerful vivacity: "Let us not despair, Roland! but trust something to that Providence which has so signally delivered us from a fate worse than death. We are, in one sense, dependent, helpless creatures, be we where we may; and after what has just taken place, surely we ought to leave the future to God, and not despond till we have certain cause."

"You are right," said I, struck with admiration at such noble sentiments of consoling reliance on Divine Power—and which, as the stronger sex, and under the circumstances, should rather have come from me than her. "You are right, dear Adele; and I thank you for teaching me better than to give way to sad forebodings, at a moment when my heart should be filled with rejoicing at our wonderful escape. And wonderful—nay, almost miraculous—it seems, all things being taken into consideration. How indeed came this noble horse, saddled and bridled, to be standing there, at the only moment of all others when he could have saved us?"

"I do not know," replied Adele; "but I think he had been harnessed for some scouting expedition, which his master temporarily deferred on hearing the signal shouts of the returning warriors."

"But is it not strange he did not ride out to meet them?"

"It seems so to me, and I am almost superstitious enough to regard it as the design of a superior intelligence. Perhaps I should have no lingering doubts of such being the case, did I not know myself unworthy of superhuman aid."

"And if you are unworthy, dear Adele, what can be said of me? But this saddle and bridle—where could the savages have procured these?"

"Doubtless taken from some victim, in one of their marauding expeditions to the south; for these Arrapahoes sometimes join the Camanches in their descent upon caravans and the frontier towns of Mexico, and sometimes the two tribes war against each other."

"I would I knew the fate of my brave companions!" I pursued; "if any, and how many, escaped—and who were those you saw brought in prisoners. Poor fellows! their's, at least, I think, will be a horrible doom. And doubtless I should have suffered with them, had it not been for you, my dear Adele. Trust me, I shall not soon forget your devoted heroism."

"The heroism is yours, Roland, not mine," returned Adele, quickly. "I only saved my noble deliverer by a timely word, and can lay claim to no merit. All the devoted heroism of the whole affair belongs to him who ventured hundreds of miles, through perils, into the country of the white man's foe, to set the friendless captive free—risking fortune and life

for one who can never repay him. May God ever bless my noble preserver, Roland Rivers! And surely, sir, if you do not meet your reward in this world, you will in the next."

"I have it already," I replied, in a low, tender tone; "in clasping here, in freedom, the form of a being which my heart tells me I love. Ah! my dear Adele, I must confess it—all that I have done for you has been more selfish than you seem inclined to suppose. The impression which our first interview made upon my heart, was too deep to be erased; and time and circumstances have only increased it,

'As streams their channels deeper wear.'

I did not then think I loved you—for I scarcely knew what love was; but now I feel as if we were born for each other; and I know that in your absence I could not be happy. I then felt I could be a brother to you—I now feel that I must be more. How is it with you, Adele? You are now alone in the world—without home, without relations, without friends—will you look upon me as a protector? as something more than a brother? In a word, are you willing to share my fortune, be it good or ill?"

"Oh, Roland!" sobbed Adele; "I only know your words make me happy, and I was never happy before."

"God bless you!" cried I, impulsively straining her to my heart, and venturing to press my lips to her's for the first time. "You shall be mine! and my life

shall be devoted to making your happiness complete."

It was a strange place, and time, and occasion—there, on that wide prairie, just escaped from our foes behind, and looking forward to new dangers—to make such an avowal of my love; but the very scene, and time, and circumstances, called it forth; and I allowed my feelings to have full sway, and have not lived to regret that my words then made happy the heart of the being I truly loved. And what time and place could have been more appropriate? Love sometimes springs up in a moment; peculiar circumstances may develope a passion stronger than mortal life; affection, once seated in the heart, may never leave it; and when such is felt to be the case, the sooner there is a mutual understanding between two beings who seem born for each other, the sooner will each heart feel the influx of a holy joy which we trust will be endless. Adele was alone with me—weak, friendless and dependent—and was it not a virtue to let her know it would make me happy to be allowed to devote my time to her happiness?

After a pause of a few minutes, during which we continued to ride slowly along, I resumed:

"But, my dear Adele, let me not in this happy moment forget the noble generosity of one, a stranger to you, without whose assistance I might not have been in a condition to render you a service. I am not the only one who has periled life, and used the means in his power, to free you from a terrible capti-

vity. The name of the noble Juan El Doliente must be remembered in your prayers; and if in this world now, I fear, alas! he needs the interposition of Heaven to save him from an awful death."

"What do you mean, Roland?" inquired Adele, looking up in surprise.

Hitherto I had only mentioned my companions in general terms; but now I proceeded to speak of the Spaniard in particular. I gave her an account of our meeting, and the conversations I had at different times held with him concerning her; told her of the deep and apparently unaccountable interest he had taken in her welfare; and clearly stated how much we were both indebted to his noble generosity for the events which had placed us in our present positions.

"Were he indeed your father, brother, or long-tried friend, Adele," I continued, "he could not have shown more sympathy for your misfortunes, or have done more for your rescue; and now I have reason to fear that he has either been killed or made a hopeless prisoner himself. As I before informed you, I left the party separated, each going in pursuit of his horse; and you yourself have seen enough to know that there was subsequently a fight between them and the Indians, under Waralongha, and that two at least were made prisoners: it may be our noble friend was one of these."

"The saints forbid!" cried Adele. "Oh, Roland! what can be done?"

"Nothing by us, dear Adele. We can, alas! do

nothing for him, or the rest of my brave companions; if we can save ourselves, it is all we can hope for. I only felt that justice required you should know that not to me alone do you owe your deliverance."

"You call him Juan El Doliente—Juan The Sufferer—it is a singular name, and I will remember it in my prayers. It is strange he should take such an interest in me. Do you think he fancies he knows anything of my early history?"

"I do not know what to think; he only said what I have repeated."

"Oh! I would that I could see him—perhaps he does know something—and I am so eager to learn anything. Was I ever blessed with the affection of a mother? and where is that sweet being now? on earth or in Heaven? For years, Roland, during my lonely life, I have pondered this mystery by day, and dreamed of it by night; and yet all is dark and mysterious. Oh! if I could but see this stranger, perhaps he could throw some light upon the subject!"

"I had hoped to see you meet, but I fear now you never will—at least on earth."

"Ah! it would be something if I could only have one moment's interview, to offer him my poor thanks, and tell him how grateful I feel!" she rejoined, with a deep sigh. "But in this, as in all else that befalls poor human nature, we must say, with resignation, 'God's will be done!'"

"Even so," said I solemnly; "and blessed are they whose *hearts* can add, 'Amen!'"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE PARCHED DESERT.

For some two or three hours we now rode forward at an easy pace, keeping due west. By this time the sun had well advanced toward meridian, and the heat began to be oppressive, both to ourselves and our noble steed; yet nowhere could we perceive any signs of shade; but everywhere the same level, dreary, monotonous aspect; while the heated atmosphere, stretching over this arid waste, seemed to tremble and quiver in the bright light. Our gallant animal now began to show symptoms of thirst, and our own tongues and throats began to grow dry and parched.

"Oh! for a good draught of cold water!" at length exclaimed Adele.

"Are you hungry also?" I inquired, with considerable uneasiness.

"Not so hungry as I am thirsty," she replied. "But you, dear Roland," she pursued, with anxiety—"you are both; you feel faint. I see it—do not deny it. You have not tasted food to-day, and you ate but little last night."

"If we could only find water," said I, "I could get through the day very well; but you are not so strong as I, and I tremble lest you may be overcome by heat, excitement, fatigue, and the want of sustenance."

"I am not physically strong," she replied; "but I can bear more fatigue than you suppose. Oh! if we could but find water! and yet I can discover no signs of it in all this vast region."

"Merciful Heaven!" cried I, shuddering at the thought; "it is possible we are on one of those great prairie deserts, of which I have read, and not a spring or stream may be within fifty miles of us. I now recollect that, save a small run, near the Arrapaho village, we have not seen water since we set out this morning on our fearful race; and from our speed for the first two or three hours, it is reasonable to conclude we have passed over some forty or fifty miles of arid territory."

"Alas! what will become of us, Roland?"

"God only knows; but let us not despond."

We rode on for half an hour longer, and drew near a small herd of buffaloes, which, on perceiving us, bounded away to the north. Oh! what would I not have given for a rifle, or a holster pistol even, with plenty of amunition, that I might have followed and slain one for food! As it was, even, I felt tempted to follow them, in the hope that their course would lead to some spring or stream; but as I hesitated about turning from the point I had fixed in my mind, Adele suddenly exclaimed, with great animation, pointing directly westward:

"Look yonder, Roland! look yonder!"

"What is it, Adele?"

"Far away yonder, as far as I can see, a dark

object rises against the clear back-ground of the blue sky."

"I see something; but what is it?

"I think it is a small grove, Roland; and if so, the trees grow upon the bank of a stream, and we shall soon find water."

"God forbid that we should be disappointed in the hope!" cried I, not a little excited; and forthwith I began to urge our gallant beast forward at as fast a pace as I thought prudent.

Fixing our eyes on the distant dark object, and keeping them there riveted, as if fearful it would disappear, we pushed on for another hour, under a burning meridian sun, scarcely exchanging a syllable, and at times almost suspending our breath with an intense excitement, which continually alternated between hope and fear. As we gradually neared the dark object, it rose more and more distinctly against the horizon, till, with feelings of joy I cannot describe, we beheld the outline of a cluster of trees. Our noble horse now seemed to share our feelings of exultation, and bounded forward with increased speed; and in a short time I reined him in to a halt, panting and trembling, under the shade of a small cluster of cottonwoods.

Great Heaven! what language can do justice to the awful, prostrating sense of disappointment and despair we now experienced, on looking around and discovering that we stood on the bank of a water-course whose bed of mingled sand and clay was hard, ~~~,,

and cracked! For some time neither could speak; but after one quick, hurried, painful glance around us, we turned our feverish eyes upon each other, with a wild, startled expression—an expression which conveyed from soul to soul the terrible consciousness of our appalling situation.

"Oh, God!" murmured Adele, covering her eyes with her hands, as if to shut out the agonizing reality.

"Let us dismount," said I, in as calm and quiet a tone as the trembling state of my nerves would permit. "Our poor beast is weary; we must let him rest."

As I spoke, I slid from his back, received Adele in my arms, and gently deposited her upon the earth. The noble animal, covered with perspiration, was now trembling and panting; but, turning his head to me, as I stood despairingly by his side, he uttered a mournful whinny; and by a look, which haunted me for days, seemed to appeal to me to relieve him of his sufferings. Never had I beheld, on the face of a brute, such a mournful look of helpless dependence; and I could not but fancy he comprehended his situation, with something akin to human intelligence. I remembered how nobly he had saved us, by bearing us so swiftly from those who were friends to him, if foes to us; and the reflection that it was now beyond my power to show my gratitude, by relieving him in the slightest degree of his sufferings, caused the hot tears to fill my aching eyes. Under the half-parched cotton-woods, that stood scattered along the banks of

the arid water-course, the short grass, if not greener, seemed less burnt and withered than on the open plain; and in the hope that our poor beast might be induced to feed, and thus in some measure recruit his wasted strength, so as to be able to bear us on another journey, I removed the bridle from his head and turned him loose. He looked wistfully around, and, hurrying down to the bed of the water-course, put his nose to the hard-baked earth, and snuffed, and whinnied; and then, finding that he could get nothing to slake his thirst, he came back, and seemed to appeal to me in the same mournful manner as before. I was so deeply affected, as for the time to think more of his sufferings than my own; and had I at that moment been the fortunate possessor of a few gallons of the liquid element, I should have divided it between him and Adele, with perhaps nothing more than barely moistening my own parched lips.

Our situation was now in a high degree alarming, and was every moment becoming more appalling. Cast adrift, so to speak, upon an ocean-like desert—parched and fevered by a burning sun—without water—without food—with no cheering prospect of either before us—surrounded by enemies—a hundred miles, perhaps, from the nearest habitation of any one of our race, even were we certain where to seek it—what could we look forward to but death in one of its most terrible forms?—perhaps a lingering death of starvation, preceded by insanity! As I cast my eyes upon poor Adele who now stood before me, with clasped

hands, leaning against the trunk of a tree for support, her sweet face the very picture of hopeless despair, it seemed as if my very blood was curdling in my veins —a faint, sickening feeling came over me—and, with a groan of mental anguish and physical suffering, I sunk down upon the earth.

"Oh, Roland, you are ill!" cried the poor girl, in a frightened tone, as she sprung to my side, bent down, and seized both of my hands. "Oh, Roland—dear Roland—you are ill!"

"I feel faint, dear Adele," I replied, in a feeble voice; "but do not be alarmed; I trust I shall soon be better."

"Holy Virgin! you are dying of thirst!"

"No, my dear Adele, it is not that. I am thirsty, it is true, and perhaps a little faint for the want of food; but neither of these causes could produce so great a prostration in so short a time. It may be that riding in the hot sun has affected me."

"Ah! yes! yes! I did not think of that! Then your case is so much the more alarming. Oh, holy saints! what is to be done?"

"Try and be calm. I think I shall soon be better."

"And I have nothing to offer you—not even a drop of water, to allay the fever of a burning thirst. Come," she continued, "for my sake, dear Roland, make an effort to ride a little further—for you will certainly die here! Perhaps if we follow this dry bed, it will conduct us to a running stream."

"Your advice is good, dear Adele," I feebly replied,

making an effort to get upon my feet, which, with her assistance, I succeeded in doing; but the next instant all seemed to grow dark around me; and merely adding, "I think I am dying," I again sunk down upon the earth, and my senses deserted me.

When I returned to consciousness, after the lapse of perhaps a couple of hours, I found Adele sitting by my side, weeping and wringing her hands, the embodiment of despair. I spoke to her, and the sound of my voice seemed to infuse new life into her fevered veins.

"Oh! Roland," she cried, "you still live! I was afraid you would never speak to me again!"

"God bless you, poor girl!" I murmured.

"How do you feel now?" she inquired, with trembling eagerness.

"A little better, thank Heaven!"

"The saints be praised! Are you able to resume your journey?"

"I soon shall be, I think."

I still felt weak and sick; but my involuntary sleep had slightly refreshed me, and in a few minutes I was able to stand alone. Our poor beast was still with us; and catching and bridling him, Adele led him to my side. I managed, with some assistance from the poor girl, to crawl upon his back; and Adele getting up in front of me, we turned his head down the water-course, and started him forward in search of water.

For two or three hours we rode slowly along, under a hot, summer sun, which by this time had far de-

scended toward the western horizon. Suddenly now our noble animal pricked up his ears, snuffed the hot air, and set forward at an easy gallop.

"God be praised!" cried Adele, joyfully—"the beast scents water!"

"Do you think so?"

"Yes, I am almost certain of it, Roland. The senses of these animals of instinct, which live upon the prairies, are far more acute and unerring than those which belong to reasoning man. They will, when famishing, scent food and water at an incredible distance; and they are often the first, likewise, to warn their more intellectual companions of approaching danger."

To our unspeakable delight, the result proved that this time Adele was not wrong in her conjecture concerning the proximity of water. Our noble animal gradually quickened his pace as he went on, till at last I was compelled, for our own safety, to check his furious speed. Still keeping down the dry bed of the water-course we found its junction with a similar water-course, about a mile from where our horse first snuffed the air; and in the bed of this latter we beheld, with emotions that language has no power to describe, a tiny stream—a mere silvery thread, of not more than two hands breadth, which ran gurgling over white sand and bright pebbles—its sweet music bringing to the soul a beatific rapture, which in effect might be likened to the heavenly strain which greets

the weary spirit, long sunk in despair, as it floats to the shore of life in eternity.

Once in sight of the liquid element, it was no longer possible for me, in my weak state, to hold in check our almost maddened beast; and therefore I gave him the rein; while we both clung to the saddle, till he leaped into the run, and began to slake his thirst; when we slid from his back, and were soon following his example. Oh! that first draught of something far beyond the ambrosial nectar of the gods! What language can describe the sensations of rapture we experienced as it passed our parched and swollen lips, and spread its seemingly life-giving power through all our veins! Never before had I the faintest conception of the ecstactic thrill which might reach the spirit through the single sense of taste; and were it possible for all our senses to receive each its highest pleasure, in the same degree and at the same moment, I do not think it possible for the *mortal portion* of man to survive the event.

Having with a few draughts found immediate relief from our intense sufferings, we fortunately had sufficent self-command to avoid drinking our fill too suddenly; and we sat by the purling rivulet, looking at each other, expressing our joy and gratitude in fervent words, and ever and anon bathing our hands and faces, and taking another and another delicious draught, till nature became satisfied, and we found ourselves, as if by magic, with renewed life, and strength, and hope.

"You are better, dear Roland!" exclaimed Adele, joyfully. "I see it in your sparkling eye and animated features."

"We are both better, thank God!" I replied; "for I can see the same happy change in you which you perceive in me."

"Oh! we cannot be too grateful to an over-ruling Providence for our second happy deliverance!" rejoined Adele; and as she spoke, she lifted her eyes in silent prayer to the great Unseen—a prayer of thanksgiving in which my own heart joined.

But our perils were by no means past; our difficulties were not yet all surmounted; and all too soon this painful conviction forced itself upon us—coming like the black storm-cloud in the serene heavens, to shut out the sun of hope—or like the dark pall of death, to cover the body of our joy. We were still in the great wilderness, surrounded by dangers, and grim starvation still stared us in the face. Our burning thirst quenched—our weary bodies filled with new life and strength—we now, alas! began to experience the sensations of hunger in a marked degree; and the fact that we could not look forward with certainty, scarcely with hope, to timely relief, was the cause of sad, painful and prostrating forebodings—forebodings, indeed, which sharpened our desires, and rendered the cravings of nature more keen. We were not at this moment actually suffering for the want of food; but we knew we could not long exist without

it; and this fearful knowledge caused us mental, at least, if not physical pain.

What was to be done? and how and where should we pass the night? The sun was far on the decline, and darkness would soon overtake us; and yet the place where we were, devoid of trees as it was, did not seem suitable for an encampment. Away in the distance, toward the west, we perceived a small cluster of cotton-woods; and after a brief consultation we decided to ride thither, and trust the rest to that Providence which had so kindly watched over us. Our weary beast, which was now eagerly cropping the nutritious grass, having drank his fill of pure water, was readily caught; and again mounting him, we were soon pursuing our unknown course along the banks of the tiny stream, which we had resolved to keep in view until we should reach its head waters or find it necessary to alter our course.

Just as the sun, in a blaze of glory, was sinking below the western horizon, we reached the cotton-wood grove; and somewhat to our delight—for their very presence seemed to cheer us—we found a few gay birds fluttering among the tremulous leaves, and twittering away as gaily as if there were no such thing as human misery on the great earth, above which they daily winged their flight and sung their songs. My first care was to unsaddle our gallant beast and hopple him—which latter I did by means of straps taken from the bridle and saddle, which I buckled and joined together as best I could. One

buckle, with a sharp-pointed tongue, I made use of, in lieu of a knife, to sever some strips from the saddle-cloth, which I tied together, to serve as a tether; and driving a short, dry stick into the ground, I felt quite relieved to know I could picket the animal near me, after allowing him a reasonable time to feed, while the remainder of the saddle-cloth would serve in some measure as a blanket for Adele.

Having thus, as well as my straitened circumstances would permit, made my preparations for passing the night, which had already begun to spread its dark mantle over the earth, gradually shutting in the monotonous view of the mighty desert around us, I threw myself down on the ground by the side of my gentle companion, and, encircling her with my arms, drew her fondly to my heart. For some minutes we sat in gloomy silence, each busy with painful thoughts, which neither felt disposed to make known to the other. We were both much fatigued with our long ride, and both somewhat faint for the want of food, while the prospect before us was far from cheering. With plenty of game, and means for lighting a fire and cooking it, we should have been comparatively happy in the present, and could have looked forward to the future with hope and joy; but as it was, the thought of the morrow increased our gloom.

"We are fortunate in one thing, dear Adele," said I, at length, speaking abruptly from my train of thought; "we shall not suffer from the cold, even though we have no fire."

"We are fortunate in many things, dear Roland," she replied, in a low, tremulous voice, which she evidently sought to render calm, so as not to betray her secret emotions. "We are fortunate in many things. We have escaped from our enemies; we have been permitted to quench our burning, feverish thirst; we are here in peace and comparative health; and though wanting food, we are not yet positively suffering; and who knows but the morrow may bring us all we desire?"

"Who knows?" said I. After another long silence, I resumed: "If we pass the night in safety, our gallant steed will be refreshed, and be able to bear us on with ease and speed toward the mountains; and if we can only reach them before we are completely exhausted, it is possible we may subsist on roots and berries till we can find some one of the several stations which here and there dot the great wilderness. To the best of my judgment, we must now be within one or two days' journey of St. Vrain's Fort; but not knowing the proper course to pursue, we may never find it. However, my dear Adele, let us not despair, but trust the future to God. You are fatigued; pray lie down here, and get what rest you can; the ground, fortunately, is dry, and this saddle will serve you for a pillow, and this cloth will keep you from the dew, should any fall."

"And you, dear Roland?"

"I will sit by your side and watch."

"But you will be worn out!"

"No, I feel quite strong now."

"But you must sleep too! You must let me watch a part of the night at least!"

"Very well; if you will sleep now, I will consent to let you watch toward morning."

With this understanding, Adele laid her head upon the saddle, and I covered her with the saddle-cloth; and in a few minutes nature asserted its mastery, and her wandering thoughts became involved in peaceful dreams.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE WOLVES OUR FRIENDS.

THERE was a kind of subdued, melancholy pleasure, in sitting there, by the side of one I loved, and listening to her gentle breathings, while "nature's sweet restorer" set a quiet, peaceful seal upon her external senses. Minute succeeded minute, hour followed hour, and yet she continued to sleep as tranquilly as if upon a bed of down, her gentle respirations being barely audible to her lonely listener. Had the future opened serenely to the mind, without the dark shadows which fancy now placed in the vista through which it looked forward to a distant point of time, those hours of lonely, solemn watching would have been among the happiest of my life; but it was impossible to

divest myself of a fear of approaching danger in some form, or think of coming hours without an undefinable dread. Happy sleeper—happy now, at least, in her unconsciousness—to what scenes of peril, trial, and suffering might she not awake! It was pleasure to see her sleep; it would be happiness to guard, protect, and provide for her necessities; but it would be more than death to see her snatched suddenly from me, by man or beast, without the means of striking a single blow in her defence; or see her wither and waste away, like a blasted flower, without the power of supplying the common demands of nature. It was this reflection that made me sad, gloomy, and wretched, even while my heart felt something like joy that she was still safe and sleeping sweetly under my vigilant eye.

For hours, I say, I sat by the side of her I loved—my back braced against the trunk of a large cottonwood—my eyes wandering over the dark plain, in search of danger—and my ears listening to catch the slightest sound. We were in a lonely region of country, where wild and savage beasts, and wild and savage men, were lords and masters of the soil; and there was no telling what moment we might be surprised by a foe, against whose fell design, weak and defenceless as I was, I could bring no opposing force. The fact that I had no weapons of defence, and for this reason knew myself almost as helpless as an infant, rendered me in a great degree a very coward; and therefore I watched with timid uneasiness,

often starting at the objects of my fancy, and fairly trembling at any unusual sound.

While I watched, I gradually fell into that comatose state, in which the mind acts in the double capacity of sleeping and waking—when we dream, and know we dream, and yet are conscious of external surroundings, but without the power of distinct comprehension. At length I began to experience a sensation of fear and dread, as if some dark object were creeping softly to my side; and arousing myself suddenly, I beheld, by the light of the moon, which had now risen and was pouring its silvery beams upon the broad plain, a large prairie wolf within ten feet of me. I started to my feet, with a cry of alarm; and taking fright, he bounded away, with a fierce howl, and soon disappeared in the uncertain light.

The noise awoke Adele, who also started up in alarm, exclaiming:

"Where am I? what is it?"

I hastened to explain, and endeavored to persuade her to lie down again and sleep on; but she declared she felt quite refreshed, and insisted that I should take her place, and allow her to watch, according to our agreement. I was loth to do so; but she held me to my promise; and feeling the need of rest, to enable me to make a long journey on the morrow, I finally yielded assent.

But my first care now was to picket our horse, which was still feeding at no great distance; and having accomplished this, I took a general survey of

the mighty scene, by the pale light of the waning moon, which shone through a cloudless sky, its silvery rays falling upon the great desert with a subdued and solemn effect; and finding all still and quiet, as if nature herself had sunk to repose, I placed my head upon the saddle, intending merely to rest my weary body and limbs, and keep watch with Adele at the same time. But scarcely had my head touched my pillow, when my eyes closed, my senses grew confused and wandering, and in less than five minutes I was sound asleep.

I slept for hours, unconscious of everything; and when I at last awoke, I saw, to my surprise, that the moon was high in the heavens, and that her pale light was feebly struggling with the first gray of morning. I started up, and looked around me for Adele; but, to my dismay and alarm, she was not to be seen. I called her by name—but received no answer. I looked for my horse; but he was quietly lying on his side by the picket, where I had left him before lying down myself. What could have happened? Apprehensive of something terrible, though I knew not what, and with a cold sweat starting from every pore, I hurried about in search of her, continually calling her by name. It was not long ere I espied her fragile form, lying upon the bank of the little stream, a few rods below the camp. I ran to her side, bent over her, and seized her small, white hand, fearful of finding it cold in death. But no—to my

unutterable joy it was warm—her pulse beat regularly, and her respiration was gentle as one in sleep.

"Adele!" I cried, still frightened and apprehensive. "Adele! dear Adele! for God's sake, awake!"

"Oh, Roland, what is it?" she exclaimed, starting up in terror. "Quick! Tell me what has happened?"

"Nothing, dear Adele, if you are well. I was alarmed for you. Why are you here? are you ill?"

"Forgive me!" she said, looking hurriedly around; "forgive me, dear Roland! I am but a poor sentinel, I see. Ah me! to fall asleep on my post!"

"God be praised if it be nothing worse!" said I, with a feeling of relief which can better be imagined than expressed. "I was fearful something terrible had happened to you. To fall asleep was natural, for one who had undergone so much fatigue as you, dear Adele; but pray tell me how it is I find you here?"

"I will, dear Roland, and you must forgive me—it shall not happen again. After you fell asleep, I began to grow drowsy myself; and fearing I should give way to my feelings and lose myself, I got up and commenced walking to and fro in front of you. Then feeling thirsty, I came down here to take a drink; and having drank, I sat down on the bank, and that is the last I remember."

"Poor girl!" cried I, clasping her to my heart: "I am glad you slept, for you were wearied out; but you should have left me on the watch, for we might have been surprised and killed. But all is well—God in his mercy has guarded us!"

"Oh, dear Roland, I am so grieved and troubled at this!" she continued. "You will not dare to trust me again; and you will wear yourself out in keeping guard, because of my present neglect."

"Say no more about it, dear girl; perhaps we shall have no more need of nocturnal vigilance. It was all for the best, I think; and if you feel refreshed, I am glad it happened."

"Oh, yes, I am greatly refreshed, and feel quite well."

"But you must be faint, nevertheless!" said I, despondingly; "for it has now been twenty-four hours since you have tasted food."

"And longer since any passed your lips, dear Roland," she replied, in a tone of deep feeling. "You do not seem to think of yourself."

"God grant we may find some means to allay the cravings of hunger ere we sleep again!" I rejoined; "though I confess I have but little hope. But come! day is dawning; and if you feel able to ride, we will set off at once; for it is useless to remain longer here, since our gallant steed has received his proper food and rest."

"I am ready, dear Roland; and oh! believe me, I feel quite strong."

I hastened to prepare our horse for our second day's journey; and having watered him at the brook, and drank as much as we could ourselves, we mounted him once more, and were soon galloping easily and swiftly over the plain, still keeping as near as possible

due west. This course, much to our regret, in a very short time led us across the little stream—which, on account of its channel running almost north and south, we were compelled to leave behind us; but I thought it more expedient to incur the risk of finding water on our route westward, than to delay reaching the mountains by taking another course.

Never did I behold a more grand and glorious sunrise than on that morning. The atmosphere was clear and still—not a single cloud dotted the heavens—and the even line of the eastern horizon, stretching away north and south, as far as the eye could reach, allowed every tint and shade to be perceived in its dimmest and brightest hue, and in its deepest and broadest extent. First a pale, golden streak shot up toward the zenith, and gradually spread abroad to the north and south, till it so perfectly blended with the serene blue sky that the eye could not mark where it began or ended. Then came another streak of brighter gold, and floated away like a thin, transparent vapor, or tissue-tint, deepening the hue and heightening the beauty of the first. Then another and another followed in rapid succession, till the whole east was a deep golden glow. Then shot up a streak of pale crimson; and as it floated over the golden background, the effect was beautiful beyond description. A few more shades rapidly succeeded each other, each deeper and brighter than the last; and then the eye was enchanted with a golden vermillion, which grew brighter and more bright, with the increasing light,

till the golden vermillion seemed blended with a flood of liquid silver; and then the sun burst upon the scene with a glory beyond the power of language to portray.

Notwithstanding our trying, painful, and perilous situation—a condition calculated to withdraw our thoughts from all things foreign to self-preservation —we could not forego the pleasure of turning to view so glorious a manifestation of God's limning on the canvas of heaven, nor look upon it unmoved by a thrill of delight that penetrated to the very soul.

"Oh! how gorgeously, gloriously beautiful!" exclaimed Adele; "and with such a beginning of the day, can we augur a night of gloom and despair to follow?"

"We will hope otherwise, dear Adele," I replied, with what cheerfulness I could assume.

We rode on, at an easy gallop, for some two or three hours, when we came to another little run, or water-course, which was almost dry. Here we stopped and watered our horse, and drank what we could ourselves. On casually examining the ground here, I noticed, with uneasiness and some alarm, the hoof-prints of other horses, in the yielding sand or clay—and that they led off in a southerly direction—but whether they were wild, or carried Indians on their backs, I could not determine. There were buffalo tracks here, also, in great numbers; and I thought it not improbable that a party of Indians had recently passed here in pursuit of them. The ground here,

too, I observed, began in a slight degree to change its character; and looking carefully westward, I perceived, with feelings of delight, that the surface grew gradually rougher, more broken, and rolling. I pointed out the change to Adele, with the observation:

"I think we must be nearing the base of the lower range of mountains."

"We are—we are!" she cried, joyfully, clapping her hands, and her sweet features beaming with animation. "Look yonder, Roland—I have just made one discovery more—do you see it?"

"I do not—what is it?" I replied, after a quick, eager look westward.

"Do you not see yonder mountain peak?"

"No! no! where? where?"

"There—yonder—in the direction I am pointing—do you not see it now?"

"No, I do not, I am sorry to say."

"Do you see anything?"

"Ah! now I see some dark objects in the distance, which appear to be moving—but it is more reasonable to suppose them buffaloes than mountains."

"No, no, Roland—higher—farther."

"I see a white, fleecy cloud, near the horizon."

"That is it—that is it: it is no cloud: it is the snowy peak of one of the Rocky Mountains."

"Are you sure, Adele? Oh, do not let us deceive ourselves!"

"I am sure, dear Roland—for I always used to

see similar peaks after crossing the prairies toward Santa Fe!"

"Heaven be praised! then we may reach the lower hills before night-fall. Come! come! I am impatient now: let us remount and press forward!"

"And what shall we do when we reach the hills?" inquired Adele, despondingly, as I lifted her upon the saddle, and sprung up after her.

"We may be able to subsist on roots and berries, till we find some station," was my reply, as I started our gallant beast forward at a quicker pace than usual.

The sun by this time had begun to heat the dry atmosphere, and our long fast began to cause us unpleasant sensations. We now began to experience the keen gnawings of hunger, accompanied with a feeling of faintness and lassitude, which greatly depressed our spirits, and created serious apprehensions that we should not be able to even ride through the heat of the day, and might consequently be compelled to pass another night on the open plain. But we strove to cheer ourselves with hope, and nerve ourselves with will; and on we dashed, with all the speed which our poor beast could sustain.

Presently we perceived, by unmistakable signs, that we were approaching the borders of a buffalo range; and had I been in possession of any of my weapons, my weakened and wearied frame would have been strengthened by the certainty that we should soon be in possession of life-sustaining food; and even as it

was, it afforded me some consolation to hope that some accident among the herd might put a portion of a carcass at my command. I knew that wolves followed the buffaloes, and killed the disabled, and sometimes the calves; and I thought it barely possible we might come upon the slaughtered game, in time to frighten away the voracious destroyers, and get enough for a single meal. The animals I had seen in the distance, proved indeed to be buffaloes—the straggling members of a large herd—and the first we had seen since the few which had fled from us the morning previous. As we neared them, they took fright, and ran westward; and we pressed on after them keeping them in sight, till we had the satisfaction of seeing them join the main body, which gradually came into view, stretching away, north and south, in a long, unbroken line, and numbering thousands, and hundreds of thousands, and perhaps millions.

Cheered by the sight, and the hope of soon getting possession of food, I still urged on our gallant beast, almost forgetful of our present sufferings in the anticipation of soon finding relief by some Providential acquisition. As we neared the body of the herd, which was slowly moving southward, I eagerly ran my eye up and down the long line; and with a thrill of joy, of which no language can convey an adequate idea, I soon perceived, away to the north, a small band of wolves, harassing a cow and her calf, which they had managed to separate from the herd, and were now

trying to separate from each other; while she, turned at bay, was eagerly striving to protect her young and get back to where she would be protected by numbers. Instantly I turned my horse in that direction, but checked his speed, that I might not advance upon them prematurely, and thus destroy what might possibly prove our salvation. Gradually drawing as near to the hungry wolves as I thought prudent, I made a halt, and watched the operations of the carnivorous beasts, and their distressed victims, with such contending emotions of hope and fear as kept my poor brain in a whirl of painful excitement. Some idea of our feelings may be formed, when I state that our minds became gradually wrought up to such a pitch, as to mentally stake our own lives upon the success of the canine beasts; and although we could not but pity the poor mother, striving to protect her helpless young, yet every advantage obtained by her foes—which, under the circumstances, we regarded as friends to us—sent the quickened blood, heated with joy, to our very hearts.

"Oh, holy saints," prayed Adele, "assist us in this our last extremity!"

"Amen!" said I—"if the saints have power."

"*If?*" exclaimed Adele, crossing herself, and turning upon me a startled, reproachful look: "do you then doubt, Roland, that the saints have power?"

"I believe God has the power," I replied; "but I was not, like you, educated in the belief that the saints have any control over things terrestrial."

"Oh, Roland—I thought, till now, your belief and mine was the same."

"Will it lessen your estimation of me to know the contrary?"

"I cannot say now—I must think the matter over in a calmer moment."

"That is best, Adele," I replied; "and it is hardly proper to enter into a theological discussion while on the point of starvation. You believe in God—so do I; and we can in this meet on equal grounds, and both appeal to the Divine Creator and Ruler of the Universe, without either doing violence to the educational doctrines of the other."

The subject, which was not appropriate to the occasion, dropped here, and we both directed our attention to the contest, in which we felt as if our lives were at stake. Never did moments pass in which I experienced more intense excitement, than in watching the issue between the poor buffalo-mother and her blood-thirsty foes. The former was standing at bay, bellowing in her anger, fright, and despair, and making desperate efforts to break through the line of her snarling, growling persecutors; while her frightened calf cowered tremblingly behind and under her, and continually gave voice to its terror, in tones to excite human, if not brute, commiseration. It was clearly the design of the wolves to separate the calf from the cow; and to accomplish this, they would completely surround both; and while those in front would arrest the attention of the mother and draw an

attack upon themselves, the rest would fly at her offspring, and bite it, and bewilder it with their savage barks and growls; and would just be on the point of succeeding in their fell purpose, when the devoted mother would suddenly wheel upon them, drive them back, and afford the horrified victim a temporary relief.

"It is like a war of mankind—the many against the few—the stronger against the weaker!" said I to Adele; "but with this difference—that though the stronger in both cases may conquer, and oppression be triumphant, man may appeal to the higher tribunal of eternity, and find justice meted out to him and his persecutors; while the poor brute suffers without hope, or after life, or future restoration. It is my belief—if I may be permitted to mention the matter in this connection, dear Adele—that each and every individual will receive equity in the after life, whatever may be his profession or faith in this; and so he sin not against the light he has, and the monitor within, all will be well with him."

"I know not that we differ in this respect," she replied. "But see! is not the contest yonder about to terminate in favor of the wolves?"

"It is in truth!" said I, joyfully, starting our horse slowly forward, to be ready for the eventful moment of victory to them and us. "The poor mother grows weary—she must soon succumb."

Scarcely had I uttered the words, when I saw three or four of the fiercest of the wolves spring

between the poor cow and her calf—and the next moment the helpless victim was throttled, and borne to the earth.

"Now is our only chance," I shouted; and in less time than it takes me to record the fact, my fiery steed was bearing down upon them with all his speed.

The distance was scarcely more than a good rifle shot, and we fairly flew over the ground; but so fierce and ravenous were these hungry beasts of prey, that when we reached the slaughtered calf, and literally rode amongst its slayers, causing them to scatter with fear, the body was already torn open to the entrails, and at least one half devoured. One minute later and there would have been nothing left.

With a wild cry of ecstacy, I sprung from my horse, seized the bleeding remains, and threw them across the saddle; and then, as the joyful truth thrilled us, that food was once more within our reach—and that, for the present at least, we were saved from the horrors of starvation—our very souls poured forth a silent prayer of thanksgiving to the Great Unseen, and tears of gratitude dimmed our eyes.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE FAITH OF MY COMPANION.

BEING now in the possession of food, our next immediate want was a fire by which to cook it; for to devour it raw, with anything like relish, would require a still longer fast; and besides, it now suddenly occurred to me, that by means of a flinty stone, and a buckle, and some dry, tinder-like grass, a fire could be kindled without much difficulty. But the place where we were was not the proper one for trying the experiment; and so remounting my horse, and disposing of the mutilated and bloody carcass in such a manner that it could be carried in safety, without allowing any portion to hang down in tempting proximity to the hungry wolves*—which were loping around us, licking their chops, and growling their displeasure at being so summarily robbed of their hardly won treasure—I urged the noble animal

* The wolf here spoken of, is not of that large, ferocious, and dangerous species, which prowls about mostly in the night, and attacks other than non-resistant animals; but, on the contrary, is small, crafty, and cowardly; and gains its living by following a large herd of buffaloes, and preying upon the young, sick and disabled. These wolves will follow the hunter, like so many dogs, living on what he leaves; and will frequently enter the camp at night, and steal what they find edible, without disturbing the sleepers. They are, in fact, more annoying than dangerous.

in among the vast herd of buffaloes, determined to ride through them rather than go back.

It was an exciting passage—that passage through an almost numberless throng—a mighty stream of huge, living animals—which shrunk back from us in terror, smelling the blood of their kind, and plunged and bellowed around us—and at times, from their movements, exciting serious apprehensions that we should be overthrown, trampled upon, and crushed. In the middle of this living stream, we looked for a glimpse of the distant prairie; but as far as the eye could reach, we saw nothing but a compact and moving body of animal life—a sight that was grand, sublime, and, in our situation, awful; for should there chance to be a stampede, we knew our lives hung upon a brittle thread, that might snap at any moment. For nearly two hours we struggled through this tremendous herd, almost suffocated with dust and heat; and when we finally rode clear of them, on the western side, we felt we had new cause to be grateful for another wonderful preservation of our lives.

Fatigued and half famished, faint and thirsty, we now looked eagerly around for a suitable place to camp; and it was with feelings of delight we beheld a charming little grove covering a knoll, or swell of ground, about half a mile distant, with a clear, tiny stream of water flowing along at its base. We were not long in reaching this delightful spot; and removing saddle and bridle from our noble brute, I hoppled and turned him loose, that he might rest and regale

himself on the sweet, nutritious grass that grew beneath the shadow of the trees. In the bed of the brook, I found a pebble to answer my purpose; and collecting some tinder-like grass, I was soon trying an important experiment with a large buckle. For five minutes I labored in vain, in my attempt to kindle the dry grass; but at last a spark caught, which I hurriedly blew to a flame; and while Adele applied some dry twigs and sticks, I jumped up and fairly danced with rapture.

"At last, dear Roland," cried Adele, clapping her hands for joy, "we have all that we have prayed for."

"Thank God, I feel that we shall be saved!" returned I, as I plunged my fingers into the tender part of the mutilated calf, and tore out a portion of the tempting flesh. "Here, Adele," I continued, "spit this with a stick, and broil and eat before you faint!"

I tore out another piece for myself; and the next moment the two ungainly lumps were hissing and sissling in the crackling flame. The instant the savory smell touched our olfactory nerves, our appetites grew so keen, that it seemed impossible to longer resist the demands of nature; and yielding to our desires, we eagerly began to devour the half broiled flesh. Never before had I tasted food to compare with that; never before had I known the real enjoyment of eating; and we ate and broiled, and broiled and ate, till pound after pound had disappeared, and an hour had been consumed in supplying the cravings

of nature. At last we drew back, satisfied, and felt that we had taken a new lease of life.

So intently had we been engaged with our plain, but wholesome repast, that, up to the moment of our hunger being appeased, our minds had been occupied with nothing more intellectual than a consideration of the adaptedness of fresh meat to fill the vacuum caused by fasting, and the conviction that man is at least half animal, and that a famishing human being may sink down to only one remove from the brute below him; but having ate our fill, we proceeded to take a survey of the scene around us, and turn our thoughts once more upon the future.

The little knoll on which we were now located, was one proof, out of many, that we were entering upon a tract of country materially differing from the great arid desert over which we had passed; and looking toward the west, we saw, with delight, that though the general aspect of the ground was level for a great distance, the surface had begun to exhibit a wave-like roll, indicating our approach to a still more uneven and hilly country; while here and there could be seen bushy and timbered hillocks, and the grass had a broader and taller spire, and, if not a greener, at least a less parched and withered hue. There was also animal life upon the scene; for besides the immense herd of buffaloes, through which we had forced our way to the peril of our lives, several straggling members of the great body could be seen in all directions, with here and there the light-

footed deer, and timid antelope, and bands of ravenous wolves, prowling around with watchful eyes and cowardly hearts, ready to attack where they might hope of success without fear of perilous defeat. The day, too, as well as the country, was growing more in our favor; for the atmosphere had begun to thicken, and fleecy clouds were floating up from the west with a cooling breeze, and were ever and anon drawing a temporary veil between the earth and the scorching rays of a mid-day summer sun.

"Well, my dear Adele," said I, "what chance have we now, do you think, of reaching the mountains in safety?"

"The best, my dear friend," she replied, with animation; "and if I could feel assured that reaching the mountains would put us beyond danger, I should rejoice in the thought that our troubles are drawing to a close."

"We cannot know what is before us, it is true," I said; "but if we may augur from the past what the future will be, we can go on our way rejoicing."

"We have been wonderfully favored and preserved, all things being considered," she solemnly rejoined; "and God, who sees the heart, knows that mine is overflowing with gratitude. Oh, Roland," she continued, earnestly, "I would that you believed as I do; for it is such a consolation in times of peril, to know that we are surrounded by sympathizing, though invisible, friends, who have already passed the narrow bounds which separate time from eternity;

and who are not only sympathizing with us, but endeavoring to impress upon our minds such hope to cheer, and such knowledge to relieve, as they, looking beyond mortal view, may discover; and who not only sorrow with us in our sorrow, but also rejoice with us in our joy, as I feel they do now! With all due reverence for the Great Supreme—who is Lord and Ruler of all on earth, and beyond earth, in the material and spiritual world, in time and eternity—I still feel that I am as much justified in praying to his ministering spirits for temporal aid, and returning thanks to them for the aid thus rendered, as I would be in calling upon you, or any other mortal, and returning thanks for your assistance."

"And you really believe that the spirits of the departed hover about you, and hear your prayers, and render you assistance?" said I.

"I do solemnly believe," she earnestly replied, "that the spirits of our departed friends are at times hovering around us; that at such times they know our wants and hear our prayers; that they do then render us all the aid in their power, by impressing us to do what will prove most advantageous to ourselves under the existing circumstances. Have you never felt, in moments of despondency, almost despair, as if you knew all would be well?"

"I have, I can truly say."

"Have you never, in moments of difficulty, had a sudden thought flash upon you, that came not

through any known train of reasoning, of a means by which the difficulty could be removed ?"

"I have—but I think that was instinct."

"And pray what is instinct?" she quickly demanded, her beautiful features lighting up with an intellectual flash that I had never seen displayed there before. "What is instinct, pray tell me?"

"That intuitive faculty by which the lower animals, and sometimes man, arrive at a truth of the greatest importance to the occasion, without any previous thought."

"And whence comes that intuition of truth, if not from a superior intelligence?"

"God is a superior intelligence, it is true."

"All life and truth comes from God, I grant; but there must be a channel, or intermediate means, through which He acts upon a creature; and why may not this channel, or means, be an intelligence inferior to Him, but superior to us?"

"That it may be so, I do not deny, dear Adele; but it does not follow I should believe it is so, simply because I cannot prove the contrary."

"I would you did believe so, dear Roland; but belief itself, is, in one sense, this instinct, or intuitive knowledge, and cannot be commanded by either reason, will, or desire. Yet, if we earnestly pray for the truth, we put ourselves in a condition to receive it. Pray for an inflow of truth, Roland!"

"I always have done so, dear Adele; but my prayers have always been directed to the Fountain

of Truth; and in that I feel I have not erred; for if I am reached by any means, those means are under Almighty control."

"You do not err in this, dear Roland; nor do I think I err in appealing both to Him and His ministering spirits; but I think I receive a consolation in my faith which you do not."

"In what respect?"

"Because we cannot conceive of God, and therefore cannot realize His presence in a human form, with human sympathy, as we can conceive and realize the presence of departed spirits, who were once human, with all the human frailties which we possess. Those nearest like us, must, in the nature of things, be in most direct affinity or sympathy with us."

"Your belief, I doubt not, is, in some respects, a happy one, whatever else may be said of it."

"You say in *some* respects, dear Roland—is it not in all?"

"Why, to my mind, there is this drawback. If you believe in the return of departed spirits, you must believe in the return of both good and evil!"

"Well?"

"Well, admitting that, you must also admit, that while the good would strive to do you good, the evil would strive to do you evil!"

"So much the more need of keeping the heart pure, and striving, through good, to overcome evil—for evil cannot mingle with good, any more than oil with water. This is our necessity—to strive against

evil influence or temptation; and you know, from your own experience, that there are moments when we are thrilled with a holy influence, and moments when we are thrilled with an influence that is not holy—the one filling our souls with joy, the other with gloom."

"Yes, I have experienced both sensations."

"Then we only differ as to the cause."

"You think both proceed from surrounding spirits?"

"I do, to a great extent. And what cause do you assign for these different impressions, dear Roland?"

"I have never assigned any, because I never thought on the subject before," I replied, giving way to reflection.

The whole idea was new to me, and deeply interesting; and I was surprised to discover so much intellectual strength in one, whom, notwithstanding my attachment, I had supposed to possess a mind not superior to girls in general of her own age. Yet on every ground taken by her, there was logic and philosophy for me to combat; and I secretly acknowledged, that in metaphysics, so far at least as her own faith was concerned, she was my equal, if not superior; and it may reasonably be inferred I did not love her the less on this account. It was like discovering a mine of gold where one had been looking only for silver. After a pause, of perhaps a minute, I resumed:

"If we are surrounded by spirits of departed friends, and others who once lived in the flesh, it is fair to presume that all mankind are; and yet for every one

impressed with an advantageous truth or idea, in a case of emergency, I think I can find twenty, at least, who are not extricated from difficulty by any cause but self-possession, and deliberate calculation, drawn from a natural course of reasoning—or perhaps simply through an experiment suggested at the moment by the circumstances in which they are placed; while, on the other hand, the failures are innumerable—even when they try an experiment that they thought right at the time, but afterward know to have been decidedly wrong—thus giving evidence, that the idea, thought, or suggestion, or whatever you may call it, originated with, and was confined to, themselves—coming from no *superior* intelligence, that would have known the right. Suppose, for illustration, that a vessel spring a leak in a dark night, near a strand of which the commander has no knowledge; there are a hundred chances to one, that he will not take the right course to reach the particular point where his life might be saved; or even if he do reach it accidentally, that some of the passengers will have jumped overboard in fright; and this I contend would not happen, if these good, though invisible, intelligences were around, and had the power to impress the terrified mortals with a fact, which, under the circumstances, would, by your showing, be known to them."

"You seem determined to annihilate the spirits," laughed Adele.

"Say, rather, I am determined to maintain the ground that there are none present, who have the will

and the power to influence mortals. Come—do you thus relinquish your position?"

"By no means, sir! and I will now attempt to answer you; but if I fail to do so, satisfactorily, attribute it to my own mental dificiency, rather than assume that my position cannot be sustained—or that spirits are not present—or if present, that they have not the will or power to impress those who are in a receptive condition."

"Taking you on your own ground," returned I, laughing, "if I vanquish you, I shall consider I have vanquished both you and the spirits, or spiritual philosophy—since, if spirits are present, and can impress receptive individuals—of which I hold you to be one—they are bound to prove their presence by convincing argument through you."

"The power of convincing belongs neither to spirit nor mortal, but depends on the condition of the hearer to perceive the truth when uttered," said Adele.

"Let the spirits then impress both," laughed I; "you to utter the truth, and me to receive it as such."

"Very well, sir. To begin then, I might first inquire what is the *cause* of that self-possession, which you have brought forward as the cause of other effects?"

"And I might reply, a strong nerve, and a cool brain—or a general organization that cannot be daunted by danger—and which allows the possessor

to reason and act as he would direct others to reason and act if an unconcerned spectator himself."

"Well, you spoke of an experiment being suggested at the moment—by what, pray?"

"By his own brain, most assuredly—influenced, as it would naturally be, by the circumstances in which he was placed at the time."

"But might not the suggestion of that experiment be the work of spirits?"

"But I showed that the experiment often failed—which would prove that the spirits are often false directors, and not to be relied on."

Adele colored, and grew confused.

"I do not know as I shall be able to convince you of what I believe to be a truth," she said, reluctantly.

"You believe it, because it is a part of your education," I rejoined. "Had I been educated like you, and you like me, we might now be arguing upon the same subject—but inversely—I maintaining, and you denying, the spiritual hypothesis."

"True, that might be—and yet the facts would not be altered!" she said, reflectively. "Education has much to do with our belief, I know; and therefore, in matters of this nature, it is important that the child receive instruction in the true faith."

"Granted—but which is the true faith? Take a dozen creeds, and each will have zealous supporters, and each will be set up by its believers as the true, and all others will be declared false or erroneous."

"But I have not yet done with our spiritual discus-

sion," she pursued. "Grant that my spiritual belief be true—and if I cannot prove, you certainly cannot disprove it,—grant it be true, I say, it naturally follows that the pure and good would attract pure and good spirits; that those who believe in, and desire, spiritual communion, would be most likely to draw around them their spiritual friends, and be in a condition to receive spiritual impressions; so that, in order to hold the ground taken by you in your illustrative argument of the vessel, you must prove that those on board were in a proper state of mind to attract good spirits, and be influenced by them; for if you admit that they might attract the evil disposed, it naturally follows that, if impressed at all, it would be to their injury."

"You maintain your position very well," said I, "and I give you credit for it, even though I may not be convinced of its truth. But how are we poor mortals to keep good spirits in attendance, since both good and bad have access to us?"

"By living uprightly, with pure motives and a clear conscience, and calling on them to assist us in our need, and sustain us in our faith and trust."

"But why do you pray to the saints, and not to particular friends you have known on earth?"

"Because the saints have been justified and made perfect, and we would call around us the good and pure."

"Well," said I, "yours is a happy belief at all events, and I would not have you change it for one

more gross and material. You cannot be far from *right*, whether you err in the special *fact* or not; for whatever teaches us to live uprightly, with pure and holy aspirations, is of heavenly origin. But who taught you to support your belief, or religion, by argument? since I have always understood, that Roman Catholics were bound to receive their faith, through faith, without any attempt to justify it by reason."

"The communion of saints, and a belief in the presence of departed spirits, is one of the cardinal doctrines of our church, which I was taught in the convent of Santa Maria; and for the rest, if you think I have sustained my position with more than my natural abilities, which are not many, then receive it as a proof that I have been assisted by my spiritual friends, who are now hovering about us!" she replied, with a smile.

"You have led a lonely life, my dear Adele, and have been much alone with your thoughts; and you have thus thought deeply, meditatively, reflectively, even beyond your years," I rejoined: "I shall therefore give *you*, not the *spirits*, credit for all you have said, which I frankly admit is above the mental capacity at which I had rated you."

Adele was about to make a rejoinder, when she suddenly started, turned pale, and pointing to the north, exclaimed:

"Look yonder, Roland! look yonder!"

I turned quickly, and beheld, in the distance, a

great commotion among the buffaloes, which seemed to be pressing forward toward the south — those behind communicating alarm to those in front, which in turn communicated alarm to those before them—the panic rapidly extending down the long line in our direction.

"It is the beginning of a terrible stampede!" cried I: "doubtless there are Indians behind! We must mount, and fly for our lives!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

SURROUNDED BY PERILS.

I RAN to my horse, which I caught without difficulty, and scarcely a minute elapsed before I had him bridled and saddled. I then hurried him to the water; and while he drank, we drank also, that we might not suffer from thirst, as on the day previous. Then lifting Adele upon the saddle, and securing the remains of our game, I sprung upon his back, and dashed away toward the west, bidding Adele keep an eye on the point whence we had reason to apprehend the appearance of an enemy, while I watched the ground before me and guided the swift-footed beast over the now uneven surface. Occasionally I glanced back, to observe the progress of the panic among the immense herd; which, as it came sweeping down the long line —the cause in one sense being invisible—reminded

me of a fierce storm, as it begins to roll over a mighty field of standing grain, its velocity being marked by its rapidly communicating commotion. As we sped on, the deer and antelope took flight, the wolves fled away howling, and the huge, straggling buffaloes snuffed the tainted air, threw up their tails, and bellowed, and began to plunge in toward the main body, to join in the terrific race.

"Had this happened a couple of hours sooner, we should have been lost," said I to Adele, as I tightened my arm around her slender waist, and drew her closer to my heart.

"Oh! I shudder to think of it!" she replied, with nervous trembling. "But we are by no means safe even now," she continued. "See! yonder they come —a band of horrible savages. Oh! pray Heaven they do not see us!"

I looked to the north, and, far away in the dim distance, beheld one horseman after another come into view, each plunging furiously forward in the exciting chase, and all evidently hard at work in the slaughter of the unfortunate buffaloes in their immediate vicinity. How many savages there were, I had no means of knowing; but my eyes rested upon more than a hundred, ere I dashed through a cluster of trees and undergrowth, upon a swell of the prairie, and descended into a long, low swale, or scoup of ground, which completely shut them from my view. By this time the great herd was in motion, far below the point where we had passed through it; and as I

now somewhat slackened the speed of our horse, we caught at intervals the sound of the rushing body, like distant thunder, or the solemn, monotonous roar of a mighty cataract.

"Do you think the savages have seen us?" inquired Adele, in a tone of anxiety.

"It is possible they may have done so," I replied; "for very little within the range of their vision escapes their observation; but I do not think we have reason to be alarmed; for they are too eagerly engaged in their present pursuit to give chase to a mounted party, whom they could not reasonably expect to overtake."

"Still I hope they did not see us," she said, uneasily; "for there might be some who would follow on our trail for the mere love of adventure, or for the purpose of ultimately returning in triumph with the scalp of a foe as a proof of prowess."

"But at that distance they might not be able to distinguish us from their own race."

"Even that might make no difference, as most of the tribes are at war with each other, and they would know with certainty that we do not belong to their particular nation."

"Have you an impression, dear Adele," I inquired, "that renders you so apprehensive of danger?"

"I at least have sad misgivings, dear Roland, that our troubles are not over."

We now rode in silence for some minutes, when we again rose upon a higher swell of the prairie, which

afforded us a distant view of our natural enemies, who were apparently all busy among the fright-maddened buffaloes—though the chase had now led them from the point at the north, where we first discovered them, nearly to the line of our trail.

"They have not seen us," said I, with a feeling of relief; "or, if so, they have evidently no intention of pursuing us."

"Ha! look again!" cried Adele, the next moment.

I did so, and thought I could preceive a small party riding out from the rest, and darting away toward us, though an intervening rise of ground soon hid them from our sight. Whether their object was to pursue us or not, I could not tell, and did not think it prudent to wait to ascertain. The distance between us, to the best of my judgment, could not be less than four or five miles—a start that would save us in a dead race, provided our horse could hold out and we meet with no accident.

"Come, noble brute," said I, tightening the bridle rein, "you saved us once in a fearful race, and you must do it again."

As I spoke, I struck him on the flank, he bounded forward, and the next moment we were descending the slope, and rushing through the swale with lightning speed. On, on we sped, rising on the waves of the prairie, and sinking in the hollows, like a vessel steering across the billows of the mighty deep. On, on we sped, startling the game, which fled from us in all directions, and scaring the feathered tribe, which

flew upward, and sometimes circled round us, uttering their discordant cries of anger and fear. On, on we sped, looking fearfully back when opportunity presented, but gladly looking in vain for a glimpse of those we fancied might be our pursuers. On, on we sped, till our gallant steed, already covered with foam, began to pant, and slacken his pace, and tread unsteadily; when, warned by these unmistakable signs, that, without rest, he would soon be a victim in our cause, I checked his speed, and finally brought him to a halt on the summit of a rocky, bush-covered ridge; which, being still higher than any one of the swells we had passed, commanded a view of the country to the eastward for ten or fifteen, and perhaps even twenty, miles.

We now dismounted, to relieve the noble animal of his heavy burden; and while Adele clambered up a high, steep rock, to keep a sharp look-out for our foes, I led the panting, drooping, and trembling beast about by the bridle, that his overheated blood might not cool too suddenly. The character of the country had changed materially during our last ride, and even within the last hour. The wave-like swells rolled off to the eastward, in a succession of gentle undulations; but from our present elevation, we could look far enough away to perceive that we had gradually been rising, and that we now stood at least a thousand feet above the point where we had broken our fast; while, to the westward, the eye rested upon a still more undulating and even hilly country, with

several white peaks in the distant view, and a dim, long, narrow, rugged line at their base, which we hailed with delight, as the summit of one of the lower ranges of the Rocky Mountains. The breeze, which still blew from the west, had a cool, invigorating effect; and we knew it had passed the region of eternal ice and snow, and been tempered with the freezing airs of those lofty and desolate heights.

"We are nearing the mountains rapidly," said I; "but the sun is far on the decline, and we shall hardly reach them to-day."

"Will our poor beast be able to take us *any* further to-day?" inquired Adele, anxiously.

"Yes, I think we may soon resume our journey—but we shall be compelled to ride slowly—for our horse has been taxed beyond his strength."

We rested here for an hour, keeping a sharp look-out for any sign indicating danger; but not seeing anything during that time to create fresh alarm, we resumed our journey at a moderate pace. Some five miles further on, we came to a suitable place for a night's encampment; and as the sun was by this time within an hour of the horizon, and our horse much fatigued, we resolved to remain here till another day. Moreover, the spot we had pitched upon had some advantages, both in the way of convenience and security, which we might be unable to find further on. A small stream of clear water flowed through a fertile valley; and not far distant was a steep, conical hill, surmounted by trees, among whose tangled

branches it struck me we could, by a little contrivance, pass the night in safety. To effect this, I immediately set to work; and by means of the saddle and bridle, including all the straps not required to hopple and tether our beast, I had by sunset constructed a comfortable sitting and even sleeping place, among the interlocking branches of the trees, where we should at least be safe from the attack of wild beasts, and run less risk, we fancied, of being discovered by any chance prowlers of the human species. As we had eaten so heartily in the middle of the day, we decided not to cook our meat before morning; and then to broil or roast the remainder of it, in order to preserve it without taint, till our appetites should demand the whole, which would probably occur before another sunset.

As the sun went down, even though shaded by clouds, it threw the mountains into bold relief; and we could distinctly trace the uneven edges of the snowy peaks against the darker background, showing we had reached such a proximity that every mile would bring us nearer in perception as well as reality. I assisted Adele to mount to what I facetiously termed her hammock; and having sprung up after her, we sat and conversed in low tones, and listened to the plaintive notes of a neighbouring whippoorwill, the booming of the nighthawk, the shrill screeches of the owl, and the various chirpings of different insects, while we watched the gradual blending of the day with night, till the deepest

shadow had been drawn over the face of the surrounding scene. We now thought it safer to remain perfectly quiet and silent—or, if we spoke at all, to converse in low whispers. One cannot long remain silent and inactive, under cover of night, after a day of unusual fatigue, without experiencing feelings of somnolency; and notwithstanding the night-breeze felt quite chilly, as it pressed through the openings of the trees, it rustled the leaves to a drowsy tune; and before either of us was aware that sleep was fairly stealing upon us, we were lost to a consciousness of external things.

We were both suddenly awakened by fierce growls and howls, sounding so near as to cause the greatest alarm; and had I not at the instant put forth my hand and caught hold of Adele, who was trembling like an aspen, I think she would have fallen to the ground. The night was now intensely dark—the floating clouds having joined, so as to spread a thick veil between us and the heavens—and, from our leafy covering, we could literally see nothing.

"God and the holy saints preserve us!" cried Adele, grasping my hand nervously. "Oh! dear Roland, what is it? what has happened? what new and terrible danger threatens us?"

Her voice was almost drowned by a furious snarling, growling, and howling, immediately below us. Fortunately, I retained my presence of mind; and though at first a little confused and bewildered, by being so suddenly awakened from a calm and peaceful

sleep, I was soon able to comprehend our true situation, and the cause of the unwonted disturbance.

"There is a flock of ravenous wolves below us," said I, "which have been attracted hither by the scent of our game."

"And cannot we scare them away?" she eagerly demanded.

"I will try," I replied; and instantly I shook the branches of the trees, and shouted, and imitated the yells of the savages; but though we could tell, from the rustling sounds below, that they drew back in fear, yet I soon became satisfied, from seeing their shining eye-balls formed around us in a broad circle, and hearing their fierce and angry responses, that we had not to do with any of the small, cowardly crews that roamed the prairies in daylight and followed the peacefully disposed buffaloes, but with a larger, fiercer, more courageous and dangerous species.

"These are mountain wolves," said I, uneasily, "and cannot be frightened away."

"Oh! Roland, what shall we do? we have no weapons."

'We must either permit them to remain till dawn, when they will peacefully depart to their lairs, or take the sad alternative of throwing down the remains of our game, whose bloody scent has attracted them here, and renders them bold and furious."

"If you think that will appease them, let us throw it down to them at once," she replied, in a tremulous voice.

"And starve ourselves," I rejoined.

"Perhaps not; we must trust the rest to Providence; but oh! let us get clear of them, if possible—for they make me faint with terror. Oh! Roland, do you hear them? I fear they will attack us!"

"Undoubtedly they would, if within their reach," said I; "but I think we are safe here."

"I do not know—oh! I do not know—I do not feel safe even here, with such a band of horrible monsters immediately under us, almost within our reach."

"And yet the alternative seems like purchasing a short reprieve."

"But that reprieve may be our salvation," said Adele. "Oh! Roland, let us give them the meat!"

"It will be only a mouthful apiece," returned I; "and I fear the taste of blood will render them more furious."

"Let them have it—let them have it!" she pleaded; "perhaps they will then leave us—and I am so terrified."

"Ha! our poor horse!" cried I.

"What of him, Roland?"

"Do you not hear him snorting in terror, and evidently struggling with his bonds? Oh, that I had left him free! perhaps some of them are about to attack him!"

"Quick! quick! Roland—throw down the game!" cried Adele.

Impulsively I seized upon the remains of the poor calf, our only food, and hurled it through the branches.

It scarcely reached the ground, ere it was pounced upon by the fierce, carnivorous beasts, which savagely fought among themselves for a bare morsel, tearing it in pieces, and devouring it, in less time than it takes me to record the fact. The effect of whetting their appetites by a mere taste, seemed to render the half famished beasts more ferocious, just as I had feared; and looking down through the leaves and branches, we encountered a dozen or twenty glaring eyes, all fixed upon us; while our ears were saluted with such outbursts of hungry rage and desire as sent the blood with a fearful rush to our very hearts.

"Oh! dear Roland, they will attack us even here!" cried Adele. "Heaven preserve us! we had better climb higher."

"It may be best," said I, much alarmed, though I strove to appear calm. "I do not think they can reach us here, dear Adele; but perhaps, by removing to a greater distance, they will be less liable to make the attempt. Yet we must do so with great caution, dearest—for one misstep might be fatal. Remain quiet, Adele, till I can ascertain if our design be practicable."

As I spoke, I fixed my feet firmly upon a strong limb, and, with my arms and hands grasping the trunk of the tree, I was already in the act of stretching my body upward, when my progress was arrested by a most strange, and at the time unaccountable, occurence.

The hungry and maddened wolves—which, up to

the moment in question, were snarling, growling, fighting, howling, and dancing around below us—stretching up their heads, and glaring at us with their fiery eyes, and every now and then making short springs from the earth, as if preparing for a bolder attempt—these ferocious beasts of prey, I say, suddenly stopped their hideous noises, and for a moment remained perfectly quiet. It was but for a moment, however; and then a wild, unearthly, half-shriek, half-yell, seemed to burst from every throat; and ere the breeze had borne this cry of terror a hundred yards, they were rushing away in a body, as if flying from some known and terrible foe, leaving us in trembling apprehension of a more fearful danger than any we had escaped.

CHAPTER XXVII.

NIGHT OF HORROR.

For perhaps a minute we remained in breathless silence, as if paralyzed, striving to catch the slightest sound, and moving not a muscle; but the dull, dreary rustling of the leaves, with an occasional sigh and moan of the breeze, as it swept with a varying current through the little grove, was all that we could now distinguish with the sense of hearing. My first movement was to quietly return to the side of Adele,

and steal an arm around her. As she felt my touch, she began to tremble, and the next moment said, in a whisper:

"Oh! dear Roland, what is it?"

"I do not know," I replied, with the same caution. "I trust it is nothing to occasion further alarm. Our noisy enemies may have scented other game, and fled in pursuit."

"But their's was a cry of terror," she rejoined. "I never heard any thing like it before. Perhaps the savages are stealing upon us!"

I involuntarily shuddered—for I knew myself in a condition to offer no resistance—but I combated her fears as well as I could.

"They would hardly have fled so suddenly from anything human, since they did not seem to fear us. It is possible that, as has sometimes occurred to us, they may have fancied danger when there was none in reality."

"I cannot think so, dear Roland; I feel strongly impressed that there is a terrible foe near us: let us remain quiet and listen."

We did so for a while—but heard only the breeze, with its sighing, moaning, rustling accompaniments.

"It is nothing, thank God!" said I at length, with a feeling of relief.

"Hark! what is that?" inquired Adele, as at the moment a distant howl of the hungry wolves came floating on the breeze.

"It is an assurance that our fierce enemies are far

away," I replied. "Depend upon it, they are seeking other game, and we have reason to rejoice at the cause which drew them from us so unexpectedly. I wonder if they attacked our noble beast. I think not, or we should certainly have heard his cries of terror and pain. Perhaps he has broken his bonds and fled! I will steal down and see; and if still hampered, I will release him, that in case of an attack, he may save himself by flight."

"Oh! no, Roland—do not stir from my side! I am so terrified!" returned Adele, grasping me nervously.

"But I will only be a moment, dearest; and we certainly owe this much to the noble animal, which has more than once saved our lives."

"I know it, dear Roland—I feel he ought to be released—but I fear to let you go."

"Do not fear—I will only be a moment—and it now occurs to me, that should Indians be prowling around, and chance to find him hampered, they will know his riders are near, and that very fact may lead to our discovery."

"Be quick then—and oh! Roland, be very, very cautious!"

"Trust me, dearest Adele, I will be very cautious, if only for your sweet sake."

As I spoke, I gently disengaged myself from her trembling grasp, and quickly and quietly slid down the trunk of the tree. I stood for a moment, peering about me in the darkness; and then gently parting the underbrush, I stole out from under the deep

shadows of the trees, to a point whence I could overlook the valley where the animal had been feeding. The night being cloudy, and the moon not being yet risen, I could not distinguish an object six feet from my eyes; but feeling my way carefully, I was in the very act of descending to the hollow, when I suddenly heard a rushing sound, accompanied by a shriek or scream, so wild and terrible that I felt my blood curdle and my hair stand on end. The next moment there came another sound, entirely different from the preceding—but so frightful, and unearthly, that I fairly sunk down, paralyzed with fear. Then immediately arose a succession of the most horrible noises I ever heard—sounds of a deadly struggle just below me—with snarlings, growlings, and gnashings of teeth, commingled with yells, and groans, and bellowings of pain, terror and despair. Hardly conscious of what I was doing, I staggered to my feet, when the shrieks of Adele reached my ear and recalled me to myself. As quick as my trembling limbs could bear me, I ran back to our retreat, and clambered up to her side.

"Oh, Roland!" she cried—"are you really here? are you safe?"

"I am here, dearest, safe and unhurt," I rather gasped than said.

"And what are those terrible noises? Oh, God help us! I am so frightened I can scarcely speak."

"I hardly know myself," said I, "for I could distinguish nothing in the darkness; but I fear some wild beast has sprung upon our poor horse."

"Oh, yes—I have it now!" she cried; "it is a panther. Yes, I have heard them scream before; but I was so terrified I did not recognize the sound. Holy saints preserve us! what a narrow escape you made! Give me your hands: I must grasp them, to realize you are still with me. Yes, it is a panther, Roland; and the keen-scented wolves knew of his approach, and fled. Thank Heaven it is no worse! for had you been killed, dear Roland, what would have become of me."

"It is bad enough as it is," said I, gloomily; "for now we are without food, without weapons, without any means of protection, and must make our journey on foot through a dreary wilderness."

"God help us!" exclaimed Adèle, bursting into tears.

Instantly I regretted what I had said—though I believed it to be a painful truth, and that she must realize it sooner or later. I made some effort to console and cheer her—but I felt too sad and dispirited myself to render my words effective. For some ten or fifteen minutes we heard the fierce beast snarling and growling, as he tore the flesh from his prey; and as I remembered how gallantly our noble steed had saved us from more than one fearful peril, and thought upon his present condition—an awful return for his noble deeds—it seemed as if a human, rather than brute, friend had been snatched from us, and so deeply affected me that I wept like a child.

Oh! that long, dismal, eventful night—would that I could forget it! for even now I can only recall it

with feelings of horror. At length the glutted panther left his bloody work, and all became quiet—but there was no sleep for us. Side-by-side among the branches we sat, and listened to the sighing and moaning breeze—which, to our excited senses, seemed the solemn requiem of our hopes. The moon rose at length, and shed a dim light upon the gloomy scene; and soon after it began to lighten in the west; and the heavy booming thunder came rolling along at intervals, like peals of distant ordnance, gradually increasing in volume, as the shower approached, till at length the lightning flashed vividly, and the roar or crash followed quickly, and the rain poured down in large streams, drenching us completely, and chilling us to our very bones.

I will not longer dwell upon that night of horror and misery. Suffice it to say, that when the morning dawned, dreary and rainy, we descended to the ground, weak, benumbed, and absolutely wretched. Though the shower had long since passed on, yet the wind had changed, and was now blowing steadily from the northeast, accompanied by a cold, drizzling rain, that we knew from the signs would continue through the day, and perhaps for many days together, and this was anything but cheering. Our first proceeding was to ascertain if our worst fears were realized; for though we scarcely doubted, yet we had tried to hope, even from the depths of our despair; and accordingly, with a kind of timid haste, we ap-

proached the spot whence we could look down into the valley below. One glance was enough to reveal the worst in its most heart-sickening aspect; for there indeed lay the mutilated remains of a large animal—his fell destroyer having torn out his entrails and eaten to satiety.

"Oh, my God!" exclaimed Adele, bursting into tears, and turning her head away.

I tried to keep from weeping, but tried in vain. I could not look upon that poor brute, and remember what he had done for us, without feeling that we had lost the only friend we had had near us in all that great wilderness; and giving way to my emotions, I sat down on a stone, and paid a second and as sincere a tribute to his memory as if he had borne the human form.

"It is right to weep over him, dear Roland," said Adele, drawing close to my side, and throwing her arms around my neck; "for in life he saved our lives, and again in his death."

"How in his death, dearest?"

"God works mysteriously," she solemnly replied, "and this noble animal was but an instrument in His hands to turn the ferocious destroyer from human prey. The panther drove off the wolves—but we should have been *his* victims, perhaps, had he not found one here which satisfied his ravenous desires."

"You may be right," said I, shuddering. "But come—we must do something besides weep now. We have a long journey, to be performed on foot, before

we can reach the mountains; and though I know you must be weak, faint, and perhaps sick, yet necessity compels me, much against my will, dear Adele, to urge you to set out now."

"I am ready," she rejoined; "and so let us hasten our departure from this horrid place."

"Ere we go," pursued I, "I think stern necessity demands of me one act, which, under any other circumstances, would be revolting in the extreme; and even as it is, I contemplate it with repugnance."

"What is that, dear Roland?"

"I must tear off some of the flesh from yonder carcass, and take it with us, to guard against starvation."

"What! eat the flesh of our noble friend?" exclaimed Adele, shuddering: "it seems like turning cannibal. But it is not human," she immediately added, "and we are not in a condition to reject any food which can satisfy the cravings of hunger. I could not touch it now, it is true—but the time may soon come when we both shall be glad to eat it."

"Well, do you remain here, while I go down and perform this unpleasant duty."

Saying this, I hastened down the hill, to where the carcass was lying—but I approached it with a sense of loathing—for my appetite was not keen enough, at this time, to render the flesh of our horse desirable food. The morning, as I have mentioned, was dark and rainy—and there was, besides, a kind of cloud-like mist pervading the whole range of vision, which

rendered it impossible to see any object with distinctness at more than fifty or a hundred feet from the eye. As I drew near the carcass, I naturally turned my sight from what, under the peculiar circumstances, I considered a revolting spectacle—nor did I again look at it, till it became absolutely necessary for me to do so, in order to perform my disagreeable task. It was thus I reached the body without inspecting it; and, in fact, I was in the very act of bending over it, when, with a kind of nervous desperation, I suddenly turned my gaze full upon it. At the first glance I started, and the next moment I was jumping up and down, clapping my hands, and shouting like a madman.

Adele, who had been watching me, on perceiving my singular and unaccountable manœuvers, came bounding down the hill, in the utmost alarm, fearing I had indeed lost my senses.

"Oh! Roland," she cried, "what has happened? Have you been bitten by a rattle-snake? or are you mad? For the love of Heaven, if you know me, speak! and tell me the worst!"

"There! there!" cried I; "look there!" and I pointed to the mangled carcass, and fairly laughed aloud.

"Merciful Heaven! what is this?" cried she, looking down, as directed, for the cause of my supposed madness. "As I live, this is not the body of our horse, but of a buffalo!"

"You have the secret," I fairly shouted almost

delirious with a sudden transition of powerful emotions—the sudden transition from despair to joy. "Our noble friend has escaped! Do you hear, dear Adele? he is not dead—but has escaped—Heaven be praised!"

Perhaps the reader may think I had small cause for such powerful demonstrations of delight; and to fully appreciate my feelings, it might be necessary for him to pass through similar scenes of peril, trial and suffering; and then to realize that the living thing which had saved him, and one more dear to him than his own life, had groaned out his death-agonies in his very ears—seeming to call on him, in turn, for that aid in distress which he was powerless to render; and then, withal, to believe that, with the noble brute, had perished his main hope of escaping with life from a dreary wilderness. Place him in my situation, let him experience the horrors of one such eventful night, and I think the veriest stoic would show the common feelings of humanity, and mourn the loss, and rejoice at the escape, of his brute friend, with outward demonstrations not unlike those of mine.

"How has this happened, dear Roland?" at length inquired Adele, when the first powerful excitement of both had begun to subside.

"God only knows!" said I; "but I feel that His goodness and mercy have been manifested here."

"They have, indeed!" rejoined Adele, solemnly; "and it becomes us, as intelligent beings, to show our gratitude in proper devotion."

As she spoke, she kneeled down upon the wet earth — I impulsively followed her example — and then and there, alone in the great wilderness, feeling ourselves directly in the presence of the Great Unseen, we poured out our souls in fervent thanksgiving for our wonderful preservation, and the recent joy which had come as sunlight through clouds of gloom to our desolate hearts.

But though our horse had escaped, and we rejoiced in the fact, yet there was no certainty that we should ever find him again; and so, after ascending the hill, and looking in vain for him over the extent of country within the range of our vision, we resolved to set forward on foot, with no further delay than would be required to complete our simple preparations. Collecting the remains of the bridle, the saddle-cloth, and some straps and buckles, that we might be able to make use of the beast should we be so fortunate as to find him, I proceeded to disengage a large piece of meat from the hump of the young buffalo, and then announced to Adele that we were ready to bid an eternal adieu to a spot where we had passed through so much physical and mental suffering.

Still laying our course, to the best of our judgment, due west, we set off at a fast walk through the wet grass and misty rain; and for the first hour we found a rather pleasurable sensation in the exertions which caused our chilled and sluggish blood to again circulate freely and warmly through our veins. But after two or three hours of this severe exercise, we

began to sensibly realize the great loss we had met with, aside from both speed and safety—for our feet, which were only covered with moccasins, now gave us warning that we could not perform a long journey without much physical suffering. The ground was rough and uneven; and, being softened with the rain, our feet slipped at almost every step; and often sinking below the surface, were bruised and cut with the small, sharp gravel-stones which lay immediately beneath.

Our appearance at this time was not such as to adorn a fashionable drawing-room. I was not only habited in the plain, rough costume of the mountaineer, but looked like one who had seen hard service—for my beard was long, my skin bronzed, my hair matted; while my garments, covered with mud and soaked with rain, were wrinkled, shrunken, and clung to me like a second skin. Nor had Adele any thing to boast of. Dressed much as she was when I first described her—with the addition of moccasins, leggings, and a kind of wampum-worked waistcoat, which she had herself constructed from materials furnished her by Waralongha while a prisoner—she looked all the worse for her long journey, and exposure to heat, dust, rain and mud; and with her black hair streaming down in tangled masses, and her face and hands tanned and soiled, she presented an exterior little calculated to excite the envy of a fashionable city belle. However, I may say, so far as externals were concerned, we looked well to each

other, and gave little heed to matters more trifling than life, liberty, health and safety.

We toiled on till the mid-day hour, and found to our dismay that we had made but little progress. From an elevation, we could look back to the point we had left in the morning; while the clouds, with their appendages of vapor, floated too low to give us a glimpse of the still distant mountains.

"This seems labor without reward," said Adele, despondingly. "We shall have to spend another night, at least, on this rolling prairie."

"But we may be as safe here as among the mountains," I rejoined. "One great object I had in reaching the hills, was the fear that we should get no food save roots and berries; but we fortunately have meat enough with us to last us twenty-four hours; and when this is gone, the same Providence that provided it may furnish us another supply."

"Forgive me, dear Roland—and ye holy beings who watch over us—for having dared to murmur, when I have so much cause for being thankful!" contritely exclaimed Adele.

"You are fatigued, foot-sore, and faint, poor girl!" said I, tenderly; "we will seek a suitable place, and stop and rest. If we could only start a fire, and cook our game, we should be in a better condition to resume our journey; but as it is, I fear we shall be compelled to devour some of it in its raw state."

"I cannot taste it at present," replied Adele, turning away her head—"but perhaps I may before night."

She looked hurriedly around, and pointing to a neighboring hill, added: "Yonder appears to be a shelving rock—perhaps we can crawl under it, and rest in a dry place."

"A happy discovery!" said I—and we immediately set off toward it.

On arriving at the rock, we found, to our great delight, that it was only one of several, which lay piled together in such a manner as to form a little cave, of some ten feet in extent, with just sufficient depth and breadth to permit us to sit erect, side by side; and what was of equal importance to its shelter, and increased our first delight to rapture, its floor was strewn with dead leaves, those farthest from the entrance being dry as tinder.

"Thank Heaven! we shall soon have a fire!" cried I, as I looked out, after having crawled cautiously in to explore it; "a few sticks are all that is wanting; and then we shall have a meal that, taken in connection with our appetites, an epicure might envy. Go in, dear Adele, while I collect some sticks in the little hollow below.

Within half an hour from discovering this charming retreat, we were broiling, toasting and devouring our meat, and drying our garments at a bright, cheerful fire, kindled just at the entrance; and never was meal ate with better relish or more thankful hearts.

"Is it not wonderful," said Adele, "that just at the moment of greatest necessity our wants are unexpectedly supplied?"

"We are wonderfully favored indeed," returned I; "and when I cease to be grateful to Him who feeds the raven, may I cease to have a being."

Having finished our meal, and cooked the remainder of our meat, to serve us on the morrow, we sat by the blazing fire, feeding it with fresh fuel, and conversing on congenial subjects, till our garments became dry, and we felt that we could resume our journey with buoyant spirits.

"But what do you say, Adele?" pursued I, as we looked out upon the driving storm, and began to think of quitting our comfortable quarters; "had we not better remain where we are till another day?"

"It is certainly not pleasant to think of passing the night in the rain, to say nothing of such horrors as deprived us of sleep at our last encampment," she replied.

"Enough, dearest—God willing, we will pass the night here in safety—for we certainly need rest."

Having thoroughly dried our garments, we let the fire die out—for, under cover, the weather was too warm to require it for comfort. I then proceeded to close up the mouth of our little cave with sticks, brush and stones, which kept me occupied for an hour. This done, and being fairly shut in, so that we had no occasion to feel apprehensive of an attack from wild beasts, we gave ourselves up to the enjoyment of the time, and never did hours fly more swiftly and happily. The past, since our first meeting, had been full of perils, privations and sufferings—the future

might come teeming with new woes—but the present we felt was ours, to mingle soul with soul through that connecting link of love which we believed could never be broken. I told my history to Adele, and, from her lips, gathered all that she knew of her own; and then, with the romance of youth, we built airy castles in the future, peopled them with airy forms, and seemed to live ourselves, as ethereal sensations, above and beyond the jars, discords, troubles and perplexities of a material world. It was a waking dream, it is true—but one of the most happy of my life—and when night drew around us her sable curtains, we fell asleep, to rest in happy unconsciousness till the dawn of another day.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ON THE MOUNTAINS.

Looking out from our little cave on the following morning, I was delighted to perceive that the wind had again changed, and that the clouds, less humid, were broken, and drifting back toward the east, showing streaks of a soft, blue sky between their picturesque fragments.

"How often hope comes with the dawn!" said I, reflectively.

"It has been a night of peace, thank God! and I feel well and strong," replied Adele, cheerfully.

We now thought it best to resume our journey at once; and throwing down the barrier at the entrance of our temporary but happy little home we issued forth, determined to make the most of our strength and time. We ascended the hill, and, standing on its highest point, took a survey of the surrounding scene. All was quiet, save a few birds, of bright plumage, which were fluttering among the green leaves, or flying from one wooded point to another, and singing their happy songs. As we were about to descend this elevation, I stopped, with my eyes fixed upon an object in the hollow; and pointing toward it, I exclaimed:

"Can I credit my senses! Look yonder, dear Adele, and tell me what you see?"

"Most wonderful!" she replied, clasping her hands. "Heaven is merciful beyond our deserts! It is our gallant beast."

"It is our lost friend indeed!" rejoined I, with a thrill of delight that words cannot express.

I hastened down the hill; and then, for fear he would run away, approached him cautiously. He looked up, and, seeing me, gave a familiar whinny, and even advanced two or three steps to meet me. On reaching him, I threw my arms around his neck, and fairly hugged him with delight. He had broken the straps with which I had hampered him on the night of his escape, and some of the pieces were still

attached to his legs and neck. These I removed; and joining them to some others which we had brought with us, I was thus enabled to so far restore the missing portions of the bridle as to put it in a condition for use; and fastening this upon his head, I led him to a rock, and we mounted his bare back. As I seated Adele before me once more, and clasped her around the waist, I said:

"It now seems as if our dangers were past."

"It is not so, dear Roland," she replied; "but our situation, compared with what it was on that awful night, is such that I must even weep for joy."

"Well, dearest, shall we push on? or ride back for the saddle, which we left upon the tree?"

"Oh! ride on—ride on toward the mountains, dear Roland!" she replied, eagerly. "I would not go back to that awful place for any consideration."

"Be it so, then," rejoined I; and turning our horse's head westward, I touched him lightly on the flank, and we set off at an easy gallop.

The day wore away without any incidents of special importance. Before noon the sun shone out bright and clear; but its heat was tempered with the cool breeze from the mountains, which we now beheld looming up before us, and which we hailed with as much delight as the shipwrecked and drifting mariner might experience on approaching an unknown coast. It was not necessarily a haven of security, or a spot free from peril—but it was a destination we

had long struggled to reach—and it strengthened our hope with a substantial reality.

We stopped at noon, and devoured the remainder of our little stock, and then pushed on again, with comparatively buoyant spirits, over the now rugged and hilly country, till at last, just as the declining sun was passing from our view, we came to a halt at the foot of a steep and lofty ridge.

Satisfied with our day's ride, we dismounted; and like Columbus, on discovering a new continent, we embraced the earth for joy. I now took the bridle from our noble beast, and turned him loose, to feed upon the rich, nutritious grass, which spread, carpet-like, over a fertile valley, that was watered by a mountain stream; and this done, we made an effort to ascend the hill which towered above us, in order to find a safe place for our night's encampment.

We had toiled up about half-way to the summit, when the deepening shadows, settling upon the mighty plain which stretched away eastward for hundreds of miles beyond the reach of sight, warned us that we had no time to lose, if we would place ourselves in security before darkness should fairly close around us. We accordingly scrutinized every object which we fancied might be made available to our purpose; and at length we discovered a large, gnarled oak—growing up beside a high, projecting rock—in whose twisted and matted branches we thought we could make ourselves secure. Ascending the mountain to the level of the rock, we easily got

upon it, and thence clambered up into the top of the tree; where, by means of the straps of the bridle, I soon managed to bind together some of the limbs in such a manner as not only to secure us against falling, but also give us a comfortable place to rest and even sleep.

We spent two or three hours in exchanging thoughts in whispers; and then, lulled by the gently rustling leaves, and the sweet notes of a neighboring night-singer, and being undisturbed by any discordant sounds calculated to create alarm, we gradually fell asleep, and heard no more till the morning minstrels aroused us with their songs to see a new day dawning with a golden glow.

Our elevation was now such that we could overlook the rough, hilly landscape immediately below, and let our eyes rest upon the level plain beyond; and never did I gaze upon a more grand and beautiful scene. In the distance we beheld, here and there, some tiny streams like threads of silver, with occasionally moving specks upon the banks, which we believed to be small bands of the harmless deer, or antelope, quietly seeking their morning fill; while nearer we once or twice caught a view of the larger elk, keeping a wary look-out for danger; and trotting or loping off in different directions, to seek what they might devour, were visible the craven-hearted coyotes, or small prairie wolves. As the sun rose in splendor upon the scene, Adele gave voice to her emotions:

"Oh! how grand and beautiful are the works of God!" she exclaimed; "and when, as now, I view them from a point which permits the vision to take in more than I usually perceive, my soul expands with an admiration that is akin to rapture. Oh! if the view were always like this, and it were perfectly safe, and we had the necessaries of life around us, dear Roland, would not this seclusion be enchanting?"

"For a time, perhaps," I replied; "but I think you would eventually tire of only one such companion as myself."

"Never!" said Adele, emphatically; and then, bethinking how much that one word expressed of the true state of her heart, the warm blood mounted to her temples, and her sweet face became one radiant glow.

"I thank you for the assurance that my companionship is so dear to you," I tenderly rejoined; "and it shall be my aim, through the life before us, be it long or short, to be worthy of the love and esteem of one I so dearly prize; but your conditional observation reminds me of the one great want to be supplied, ere this place, or any other, can long be endurable, much less become a Paradise. If we had plenty of food, with weapons for defence, I think, for the rest, we could pass many days here in contentment and happiness; but it is not pleasant to remember that our last morsel was eaten yesterday; or to ponder the possibility, if not probability, of a long and painful fast before we get any more."

"Ah! God save us!" ejaculated Adele. "Alas! what will become of us! We looked forward to reaching these mountains as our salvation—but being here, we seem to have gained nothing save the intervening hours of reprieve from actual starvation."

"We must still hope on, and struggle on, as best we may, till we reach some wilderness fort, or fall in with some of the emigrant trains on their way to or from the still Far West," said I, despondingly. "It is not wise to let our thoughts dwell too much on the future—to speculate on that of which we have not, never have had, nor can have any knowledge, till it becomes the present. We must console ourselves with the idea, that we are, even here, as directly under the protection of the Great Guardian, as if surrounded by all the comforts of civilization; that if it be His will that we perish, either here or elsewhere, the limit of His design cannot be passed; and that if it be not His will to take us from earthly scenes, we shall remain, and be provided for, even as we have been. Therefore, my dear Adele, let us for the present think only of the present; and say for the future, 'sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.'"

"You say well, dear friend," replied Adele, "that we may fulfil, but not change, the design of our Creator and Guardian; and as that design is known only to Him, it becomes us to put our trust in His Providence, and make use of the present to the best of our judgment and abilities. And now, dear Roland, as the day has fairly begun, what do you propose?"

"I scarcely know what to propose," replied I, in great perplexity. "Our first immediate want is food; but unless we watch the birds, and eat of such berries as we may see them pluck, I know of no means of procuring any sustenance whatever — and even this course will be rather calculated to prolong than sustain life; and for fear of the derangement of our systems, I think it best not to resort to it till compelled by hunger. If I only knew our exact locality, I could soon decide which course to take to reach either St. Vrain's or Fort Laramie. St. Vrain's Fort, I remember, is marked on the map near the great bend of the South Fork of the Platte, and directly east of Long's Peak; while Fort Laramie is nealy due north from the former, on the North Fork of the Platte, at a distance of more than a hundred miles. Now whether we are north or south of St. Vrain's, I cannot say, and therefore know not which course to take."

"Nor do I know what to advise," returned Adele.

"I have sometimes fancied that the first snowy peak we saw from the prairies might be Long's," pursued I; "and that was further south than we are now."

"Yes," she returned, quickly; "and now I feel a strong impression that we ought to go south."

"Then, right or wrong, we will set off in that direction," I rejoined. "Yes, my plan is settled," I continued, after a momentary consideration. "If we can once more find our horse—and I think he has not wandered far from the little valley in which we left

him—we will mount him and ride southward, keeping along the base of this range of mountains, till—"

The sentence was here cut short by Adele, who clutched me nervously, and pointed downward through the leaves and branches, saying, in a startled whisper:

"Hist, dear Roland, for the love of Heaven, or we are lost! See! see! yonder goes a mounted band of savages."

I looked in the direction indicated, and, to my great alarm and dismay, beheld a mounted body of Indians, some fifteen or twenty in number, slowly filing over a small elevation in a southerly direction; and the last one was leading a horse, which, even though the distance was considerable, I instantly recognized as the beast which had borne us hither. They did not look toward us—nor seem to be in search of any one—but rode quietly onward, and soon passed behind an intervening hill, which shut them from our view.

"God help us!" ejaculated I. "There goes our horse; and we have looked our last upon him this time, unless we meet him under the painful circumstances of being captives to those who have captured him."

"Which God forefend!" returned Adele, with a shudder, "Oh! Roland, I would prefer death to captivity. And yet, had we gone a half hour since to search for our noble beast, we might have been seen and taken prisoners by this very party."

"And what is to be done now?" pursued I, with a

feeling of despair which I strove to conceal. "The plan which I had just mentally matured, is already frustrated; we no longer have a horse to ride; and even if we had, it would be as much as our freedom is worth to take the course pursued by these savages."

"We must set off on foot," replied Adele; "and far from being discouraged, I look upon the capture of our horse as a Providential event; for had we resumed our journey in the manner you intended, doubtless we should have met with some serious disaster."

"We will, at all events, endeavor to console ourselves with the reflection, that what has happened has happened for the best," said I. "Come, dear Adele, if you are ready, we will resume our labors—for I can perceive no advantage we shall gain by delay."

Adele bowed her head, as if in prayer—was silent for a minute—and then lifting her soft, dark eyes to mine, and extending her hand, which I eagerly seized, she said, with calm resignation:

"Whenever you think it safe to quit our concealment, dear Roland, I am ready to share with you the toils, privations, and perils which it may still be our lot to encounter."

"Heaven grant, for your sweet sake, they be not many, nor long continued!" I rejoined, as I drew her delicate form to me in a fond embrace.

CHAPTER XXIX.

SICKNESS AND DESPAIR.

INSTEAD of descending to the base of the mountain, as had been our first intention, we ascended to its summit—whence we had the same grand, beautiful view to the eastward—while below us, to the westward, we beheld a delightful valley, with a clear stream of water flowing through green, shady banks, and a still higher range of hills rising just beyond. Keeping along the ridge we had ascended, in a southerly direction, we hastened forward for several hours—the scenery constantly changing, and presenting scenes and objects pleasant to look upon. Occasionally we roused the heavy-footed elk, or startled the mountain deer, which went bounding away to a denser and more distant cover; while from the rocky front of a neighboring hill we espied the mountain goat, springing up the dizzy heights where foot of human being might not follow. Smaller game darted away from us at almost every step, and gay birds fluttered and sung around us; and yet, in the midst of plenty, we had no means to procure the food which nature demanded.

At last, wearied with our exertions, we seated ourselves upon a rock; but had scarcely composed our limbs to rest, when we were startled at the rust-

ling of some bushes behind us; and looking around, we perceived a large, black bear deliberately making his way toward us. Adele uttered a scream of terror, and clutched me convulsively; and knowing there was no time to lose, I started up, threw an arm around her, and, half lifting and supporting her, hurried her forward to a ledge of rocks, which fortunately was not far distant, up which we clambered about twenty feet to a flat projection, where we took our stand and turned to take another look at our enemy. The bear had leisurely followed us about half the distance, and was now sitting on his haunches, lazily swaying from side to side, and lolling, and looking up at us with indolent composure.

"Thank God," said I, "he is not maddened with hunger, and will soon leave us in peace!"

"Oh! dear Roland," cried Adele, sinking down upon the rock, "I am getting disheartened—we are continually in peril."

"But so far," returned I, "we have been wonderfully favored in making our escape."

"But what do we gain, dear Roland?"

"Life and time, dearest."

"Life that is beginning to feel the pangs of hunger, and is every moment growing weaker—and time that perhaps brings us no nearer a point of safety!" she rejoined, with a look of despair.

"Nay, dear Adele," I pursued, "give not way to this complaining mood! You have often cheered me

in my despondency; and I pray you let the thought, that God watches over us, restore your hope now!"

"His will be done!" she murmured, burying her face in her hands.

We remained where we were for more than an hour; and then, the bear having long since disappeared, we descended the rocks, and pushed forward, till the declining sun warned us to seek a safe asylum for the night. We found a wide fissure between some rocks, which we thought would answer our purpose; and there, without having tasted food since noon of the preceding day, we made our camp and passed a night of wretchedness.

The next day, weak and faint, we resumed our toilsome, perilous journey; but we met with nothing to encourage us till toward night, when we found a paw-paw tree, the fruit of which we eagerly devoured. Soon after eating, I began to feel strangely; and discovering a small cave, we crept into it, before sunset, determined to go no further.

That night I was attacked with terrible pains, and before morning grew delirious; but my reason returned with the dawn—though I was too weak and sick to pursue my journey. What I suffered in mind and body, I shall not attempt to say; but the reader may form some idea of my desperate condition, when I state, that my constant prayer was for death to release me from the pangs and miseries of mortality. Adele was, fortunately, spared the physical pain I endured; but her mental sufferings were as great as mine; and

she too prayed that we might be removed to the spirit world.

"It is death at last, dear Roland," she said; "and though an awful death, it shall be welcome."

"Death for me, dearest, sooner or later," I replied; "but you have some strength remaining—and I conjure you, by all I love, to use it, and perhaps you may be saved."

"What! fly and leave you here, to perish alone?" she cried, throwing her arms around my neck, and sobbing upon my breast. "Never! never! never!"

"But, dearest, listen a moment to reason!"

"There is no reason in such an idea!" she wildly exclaimed. "Oh! Roland, I did not dream that my noble preserver would ever harbor the thought that I could desert him in his distress! Oh! Roland, take back your cruel request—and say you did it to try me—that you do not really think me so base and heartless as to leave you here to die alone!"

"For the love of God, Adele—dear Adele—calm yourself—and listen one moment to reason!"

"Reason!" she cried; "call you such ingratitude reason? Oh! Roland—oh! Roland—that I should live to hear such a proposition from your lips!"

"You will kill me, without allowing me a chance for explanation, if you go on this way!" said I, reproachfully.

"Well, speak, then—speak! but oh! dear Roland—"

"There, there," interrupted I—"calm yourself and

hear me for one moment—and hear me out before you reply."

"Speak, then!"

"But will you promise to hear me out before you reply, dearest Adele?"

"I will hear anything but a proposition to leave you, my benefactor and preserver!" she sobbed.

"But would you not save my life if you could?"

"Oh! Roland, can you ask me that?"

"Well, perhaps you can save my life."

"How? how?"

"Let me tell you: be calm now, and let me tell you how."

"There, there, (hastily drying her feverish eyes) you see I am calm, dear Roland."

"Listen then, and do not interrupt me, dearest. Situated as I am here, unless I receive succor soon, I must certainly die. There, there, now—hist!—you are not to interrupt me, remember! Now I am prostrated, and can go no further, be the consequences what they may; and if you would serve me, there is but one way in which you can. I am inclined to think, that if you will only hurry forward in the same direction we have been pursuing for the last two days, you will get sight of St. Vrain's before your strength gives out—and once there, you can send me assistance."

"But you might die in my absence?"

"Perhaps not; but if my minutes are numbered, your remaining cannot save me. You have some

fearful risks to run, in going, I know; but I see nothing but death for both if you remain."

"I fear not for myself," hastily rejoined Adele; "for death may as well come in the shape of a wild beast as starvation; my only fear is that you may perish in my absence."

"Then go, dearest, at once! and, under God's Providence, we may both be saved!"

I had no hope of life when I said this—for the racking pains of body, and the terrible pressure upon my brain, led me to expect delirium at any moment, and a termination of my sufferings by congestion in a few hours,—but, by holding out the idea to Adele that she might find succor before all should be over, I thought it barely possible she might be saved herself through her exertions in my behalf. It was no easy matter, however, to persuade her to leave me; and it was not till I had repeatedly assured her it was the only means of saving my life, that she consented to the separation. The parting was a trying and painful one—for there was great probability we should never meet again in this world; and though each strove to console the other with a different idea, we both secretly acknowledged there was a much better foundation for our fears than our hopes.

"Adele," said I, as she stood sobbing by my side —and every word was spoken amid racking pains that required a powerful and constant concentration of my will to avoid betraying to my sympathizing

companion—"Adele, should it be God's pleasure that I never behold you again in life—and we cannot, of course, know what is His design—I want you, if you escape, to write to my parents, and tell them how and where I came to my end; and assure them that I passed away, praying for their forgiveness, and with the hope of meeting them in a happier world."

"Oh! Roland," she burst forth—"I cannot leave you! indeed I cannot!"

"Not even to save my life?"

"Oh! how you torture me!"

"It is to save my life you go, dearest."

"But you do not yourself think you will live till I return."

"I think, sweet angel, your going now, at once, is the only chance I have of being alive a week from this. Oh! if you love me, as I know and feel you do, linger not here another moment! There—adieu—and God protect you!"

She dropped down on her knees, threw her arms around my neck, and pressed her lips to mine. For some moments she neither moved nor spoke, and I was beginning to fear her emotions had proved too much for her physical system, when she suddenly disengaged herself from the embrace and staggered to her feet. One look—one thrilling look—a look of love agonized—and with the words, "God in Heaven be merciful!" she turned and vanished.

For some minutes after her departure, I rolled to

and fro in the most violent agony of body and mind; but I suppressed my groans, lest they should reach her ears and draw her back to perish with me. Suddenly I found my sight growing dim, and felt as if my senses were deserting me.

"It is death!" I murmured—"it is death! but Adele will be saved!" and as the last word passed my lips, I became unconscious of sorrow and pain.

CHAPTER XXX.

A LONG CAPTIVITY.

I HAVE now reached a point in my narrative, where, for various reasons, I wish to pass over some fifteen long, weary months, with as few words as will serve to make the reader acquainted with what happened to me during the interval, and connect the preceding with what is to follow. How long a time I remained unconscious, but delirious, I have never been able to ascertain; but my first dim recollection, after the parting with her I loved, is of seeing, like a moving shadow, the face of an Indian floating over me; and of wondering whether it belonged to an inhabitant of this world or the other; and whether I myself was still a mortal or a spirit. Darkness intervened; and my next remembrance is of another face, with milder, and, though not beautiful, less hideous

features; and connected with this face was the form of a woman, half nude, and half clad in skins. Another interval of darkness, and I awoke, to find myself lying upon a bed of sweet-scented herbs, under a tent of skins; and seated on one side of me, a savage in his war-paint; and on the other, a squaw, past the middle age, with long, gray hair, and whose person was profusely decorated with gew-gaws and wampum.

"Where am I?" was my first natural exclamation; to which the only responses were, a grunt from the warrior and a shake of the head from the squaw.

The chief—for such I afterward found him to be—now arose, and stalked out of the lodge; and the woman began a low, but not unmusical, chant, which she continued for more than an hour—or, in fact, until I fell asleep—which I did, even while trying to keep awake and unravel the mystery.

What I learned by degrees, and after a comparatively long lapse of time, it suits my purpose to give the reader in a few words. I had been found by a party of Indian hunters, who were bitter enemies of the whites; but who, instead of killing and scalping me, had, from some motive, which I think will be apparent in the sequel, undertaken to restore me to health. Their efforts, it is needless to say, were crowned with success; and I slowly regained my health in an Indian village, to which I had been removed in a delirious state.

The party in question was a branch of the Crow nation, who had ventured far south in search of game;

and having secured a supply, they slowly returned to the main body, taking me with them, much against my inclination. At first we could only converse by signs; and by signs I endeavored to ascertain if they knew anything of my fair companion—but could gain no information to relieve my doubts and fears. I could in no manner determine whether Adele was living or dead; and the anxiety I suffered on her account, was more terrible even than my captivity; while the two united made me wretched indeed.

As soon as we had joined the main body, a council was held to determine my fate; and the final decision was, that I should be regularly adopted into the tribe. This occurred about three months after my capture; and being by this time able to make use of a few words of the Crow language, I protested against the barbarous proceeding, and endeavored to convince my captors, that, by restoring me to my friends, the whites, they would receive ample compensation. Whether they fully comprehended me or not, I do not know; but all my efforts proved unavailing; and I was forthwith subjected to the process of having my face and head shaved—leaving only a scalp-lock—and of being painted, dressed, and decorated after the fashion of the tribe.

I was now, in external appearance, an Indian, while at heart I loathed the very sight of them. I was allowed the liberty of the village, and even permitted to go on short hunting excursions with the warriors—but was never to leave the sight of certain parties,

whose duty and pleasure it was to have charge of me. They even gave me a lodge, and offered me a wife; but the former I was obliged to share with my Indian brothers, and the latter I positively declined. They evidently sought to make me contented with my new home; but my heart was far away, and I determined to effect my escape at the first opportunity. No chance offered till the deep snows of winter blocked up the passage over the mountains, which lay between me and the point I wished to reach; and then, believing my escape would result in certain death, I gave up all thoughts of making the attempt before the return of the warm season.

Our winter camp was pitched in a pleasant valley, but too far to the north to be clear of heavy storms of sleet and snow. We had plenty of wood, skins, and provisions, however—so that we did not suffer from cold or hunger—but unfortunately the small-pox broke out with great violence, and committed terrible ravages, fairly decimating the tribe, and taking off many of the best and bravest warriors, with no less than four distinguished chiefs and one Great Medicine. Until the last event occurred, the tribe bore up against the awful visitation with a bravery and resignation worthy of more enlightened beings; but no sooner passed the direful news, from lodge to lodge, that a Great Master of Incantations had fallen a victim to the fell disease, than a fearful panic seized upon the superstitious savages, who rent the air with shrieks, howls, and lamentations; and many even fled

from the infected village, to perish in the frozen wilderness.

I had, from the commencement of the disease, up to this period, spent my time in attending upon the sick, and providentially had escaped an attack myself; but this immunity from the disorder came nigh proving fatal to me in another manner; for it now began to be rumored, that I, being leagued with the Evil Spirit, had brought it upon them, in revenge for my captivity; and from the moment the suspicion found utterance, it rapidly grew into an almost general belief. Unknown to me at the time, a secret council was convened, to decide upon the manner of my death; and but for the opposing voice of an aged chief, of superior intelligence and commanding influence, I should speedily have been immolated on the altar of barbarous superstition. This chief had always been friendly to me; and he now, with a shrewdness which I have placed to his credit, took the only course which could have rescued me from the designs of his inferior and credulous associates. He cunningly met superstition with superstition. He rationally argued, that if their present affliction was the work of the Evil Spirit, acting at my instigation, the Evil Spirit must certainly be my friend; and, being my friend, if they put me to death, he would get angry—and, instead of sweeping off a certain portion, he would annihilate the whole tribe. In lieu, therefore, of putting me to death, he contended they should each and all treat me with still greater

respect and deference; which perceiving, the anger of the Evil Spirit would gradually become appeased, and the progress of the terrible scourge would be checked.

The result was, that the council adopted and acted upon this suggestion; and I suddenly received so many marks of favor, as to lead me to wonder concerning the cause, which the old chief subsequently explained to me by words and signs. Fortunately for the reputation of the latter, and my own safety, the pestilence about this period began to abate; and while he got great credit for his wisdom, I came to be regarded as a something a little more than human.

It was in the early part of winter the pestilence began its ravages; and about two months from that time it gradually disappeared. Some few who were attacked, recovered; but the majority died, and were buried in the deep snow, about half a mile from the village; which was soon after removed to an adjacent valley, on the opposite side of an intervening hill. Here, the tribe being blessed with general health, the winter amusements began in earnest. Feasting, dancing, and different kinds of athletic sports, followed each other in rapid succession—in all of which I generally took a prominent part—though, it must be confessed, with no great liking for some of the barbarous exercises. Wrestling, leaping, running, jumping, throwing the spear and tomahawk, and shooting with the bow at a target, were healthy, exciting, and not unpleasant sports, in which I freely indulged, and

occasionally bore off the palm; but the hunting, war, scalp, and other dances, were to me horrible mummeries, arousing no emotions save loathing and disgust. I was too politic, however, to let this appear; for I contemplated making my escape the following summer; and to effect this, I knew it was essential to induce a general belief that I had become attached to my new home, and no longer had any desire to return to my friends and civilization.

The snow remained upon the ground till late in the spring, and then the general hunt for game began in earnest. Select parties went out in different directions; and, after an absence of a few days, all returned, bringing in a supply of flesh, of the bear, deer, antelope, elk, and mountain-goat. I accompanied one of these parties, in the hope of finding an opportunity to escape; but was forced to return, disappointed and disheartened—though I took care to conceal my real feelings, and to appear cheerful and contented. A month later, just as the Indians were about to pull up the stakes of their movable lodges, and migrate to the south, I found a chance to get into the great forest alone, armed with a knife, tomahawk, bow, and quiver of arrows. It was the first time, since my capture, that I had been able to look around me, and not, at some point, either near or far, encounter the lynx eyes of a savage—and it may readily be believed I made the most of my good fortune. But it was not yet my good fortune to get clear of my barbarious friends, with all my endeavors; for after run-

ning for hours, till overcome with fatigue, I stopped to rest; and was then and there overtaken, and again made prisoner by a party that had followed on my trail.

Although my mind was not in an enviable state when I saw them approaching me, I suppressed all show of surprise, and gave them to understand that I had merely been hunting on my own account. They affected to believe me, but took good care not to let me try the same experiment again, at least for a long time.

During the summer, the whole tribe—men, women and children, with their tents and movables, dogs, horses, and cattle—went as far south as the Black Hills; and the most expert hunters scoured the forests, and occasionally ventured out upon the prairies; and the skins and furs they brought in, were dressed and prepared for a civilized market by the women, and the meat dried and packed for winter use. I had doubtless lost their confidence by my first attempt at freedom—for they no longer permitted me to go abroad with the warriors—but confined me to the main village, and compelled me to assist the squaws in their drudgery—though, in every other respect, I was still treated as an equal, and allowed to retain my weapons.

The mental torture I now continually suffered, I would not, if I could, inflict upon an implacable enemy; and yet, withal, I strove to appear cheerful and contented. By night and by day, awake or

asleep, the images of my friends were ever present to my mental vision; but I looked upon them as beings I might never behold with the material eye. My dear parents—were they living or dead? If living, what sufferings must be theirs, caused by my boyish rashnesss and folly! and was not my own wretched condition a judgment upon me for an act akin to filial disobedience? And Varney—noble Varney—was he still upon the earth? or had he breathed his last in lonely solitude, thinking that I, who loved him as a brother, had forgot my solemn promise, and returned to civilization without bidding him another farewell? And last, though not least in my affections, sweet, beautiful Adele—what of her? Where now was her light and springing form, her soft, dark eyes, and her musical voice? We had together seen sorrow, mingled with happiness—and our souls had seemed as one soul, cemented by undying love—but should we ever meet again in this world of change? Had she escaped the dangers of the mountains, to pass the remainder of her days among the people of her race? was she a lonely, hopeless prisoner of some savage tribe? or had death given to her pure spirit the freedom of the holy intelligences to whom she had so often and earnestly appealed through a sincere and happy faith?

I will not dwell upon my captivity, nor the tortures I endured. I have labored in vain to give the reader an idea of myself, if he has now to be assured, that, torn away from civilization, deprived of my freedom

and of all I loved on earth, I could see one happy moment; and to inflict upon him a tithe of my misery, would, to say the least, be an uncharitable act, and could serve no good purpose. That my health gradually failed, through secret grief and mental excitement, it may be proper to state; and when, at the close of summer, I again accompanied the tribe to their home at the north, it was with the conviction, that, unless I soon secured the liberty I pined for, my body would ere long take its last rest,

"Unknelled, uncoffined, and unknown,"

many thousand miles from the land of my nativity.

The Indians had once more reached their winter quarters, and I was standing one fine, autumnal night, outside of my lodge, pondering on my misery, when suddenly the conviction flashed upon me, that if I were to attempt my escape then I should be successful. I had been shooting at a target that day, and still had my bow in my hand, and my quiver contained a dozen arrows—and feeling at my wampum girdle, I found my knife in its sheath. Without waiting to consider the chances, as I had always done before, I immediately set off; and walking leisurely through the village, and passing several warriors, I quietly descended to a clear, mountain stream, as if with the intention of filling my gourd. The moment I reached the stream, I entered the water, and hurried away to the north, impelled by an impulse for which

I could not account, and scarcely able to realize myself that I was actually trying to effect my escape.

I continued in the bed of the stream for a couple of hours; and hearing no sound of pursuit, I began to tremble with hope and fear; and to such a degree, that I was obliged to sit down and rest my quivering nerves. What could it mean? Was I really destined to escape, after all? The bare hope seemed to open to my mental view the joys and beauties of Elysium; while the fear of failure the next moment sent the blood curdling to my heart.

In the boldness of my attempt, I think, lay its success. The Indians, who saw me going quietly to the stream as was my wont, could have had no suspicion of my design; and in this way I gained a start, under cover of darkness, which I could have done in no other manner. By keeping in the stream, too, I left no trail for them to follow; and by going north instead of south, I added to my chances of escape—as they would naturally suppose I had taken the most direct route toward civilization.

How much time elapsed after my departure, before they began to search for me, I do not know—but I heard nothing from them during the night. After gaining, in some degree, my natural composure, I again set forward, keeping along the bed of the stream, the water of which seldom rose above my knees. In this manner I struggled onward till the gray of morn—when, to my great delight, I discovered a hollow tree, with a limb projecting over the babbling

stream, within my reach. I seized hold of it, drew myself up, and found the hollow large enough to secrete me, but without giving me space to turn or change my position.

In this narrow aperture, and painful attitude, I remained through the day; but before night I was much alarmed by hearing a small party pass in search of me. I heard and understood enough of their conversation, to learn that they already began to suspect I had been spirited away by the Great Power of Darkness—and that if the party who had gone in an opposite direction did not bring me back, they would consider further search useless. This gave me courage and hope; but I trembled like an aspen, lest some keen eye should fasten upon my retreat and discover me at the last moment. Providence favored me, however; and just as the sun was setting, I heard them pass on their return, muttering their superstitious belief and disappointment.

As soon as darkness had settled over the earth, I crept out from my concealment, like a wild beast from his lair, and, lowering myself into the water, continued my journey toward the north, leaving no trail behind. I had now been twenty-four hours without food; but a bright hope animated me, and I struggled forward through another night; and at daylight I climbed a tree and rested in its thick branches. Hungry, weary and faint, I fell asleep, and gained a few hours of peaceful rest—which in some degree renewed my strength. When I awoke, I found the

sun had passed meridian; and resolving to change my course, press forward, and, if possible, procure food, I descended to the ground, turned away from the stream, and struck off through a deep forest, in an easterly direction.

Though in the autumn of the year, the days and nights had been unusually mild for the last week, and continued so for a week longer—which was very fortunate for me—as, otherwise, I must have suffered from cold, especially during the two nights I spent in going down the bed of the stream. Keeping on an easterly course till near sunset, without meeting with any incident to give me fresh cheer, I was beginning to despair at the gloomy prospect of passing another night without food, when, ascending a covered hill, I was delighted, even to agitation, at perceiving three or four deer just below me, quietly licking the white crust of a saline spring. I had during my captivity become so expert with the bow, that ordinarily I should have thought nothing of sending an arrow, at the distance these animals were from me, into a target the size of my hand; but now I trembled so much, with hope and fear, as to doubt if I could hit a larger body than my own.

However, I kept as quiet as I could, and summoned all my will to steady my nerves; and fixing an arrow to my bow, I suddenly drew it to its head, and let it fly with a loud twang. To my unspeakable joy, I saw it pass, true to my aim, and bury itself in the body of one of the harmless animals, which gave a

sudden bound forward, and fell quivering upon the earth. I instantly darted forward, with a velocity scarcely excelled by its flying companions, and the next moment my knife was at its throat, and the beautiful deer was my prize. Overpowered with joyful emotions, and a sudden relaxation of my physical system, I sunk down by its side—gazed upon it as the Peri looked through the gates of Paradise when she brought the accepted tear of repentance—and humbly and devoutly thanked God for all his mercies and blessings. Need I add that I feasted that night? though I cut the flesh from the deer ere it was cold and devoured it in its raw state.

It is not my intention to give a detailed account of my lonely wanderings, over mountains, through forests, and across streams, and all in the unpeopled solitudes of nature, till I once more beheld the face of a white man. Let fancy picture me, in the costume of a savage, encountering, for a month, all the vicissitudes and perils of a lonely journey, through a rough, howling wilderness, seeking food where I could find it, continually on the alert for danger, and sleeping in tree-tops, and in caves, and often suffering from cold, hunger, and fatigue—let fancy, I say, keep me before the mental vision for a long, weary month—and then, if it can, let fancy portray my feelings, when I met with the adventure I am now going to narrate.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A WONDERFUL SURPRISE.

I HAD reached, in a tolerably good bodily condition, a certain portion of that range of mountains known as the Three Parks—when, about noon one day, having ascended a high, steep hill, I looked down into one of the most beautiful valleys I had ever seen. This valley, some two or three miles in length, by some half a mile in breadth, was completely walled in by mountains, save a narrow aperture at either end, where a clear stream of water, flowing quietly through its centre, found its inlet and outlet. Over this smooth, level surface, were scattered various kinds of trees, which seemed to have been planted at measured distances from each other; and though the frosts of the season had crisped and killed the leaves on the highest elevations, and the winds had scattered them over the earth—leaving giant trunks and bare branches to stretch gloomily upward, as it were, to the very heavens—yet here no rude finger of autumn had been laid, and the enchanting valley appeared like a brilliant emerald in a brown setting. I could scarcely credit my senses. Green leaf, green blade, gay flowers, with a stream of silvery sheen, were quietly reposing in the bright light of a noon-day sun; while birds of many hues, which belonged

to a more southern clime, were fluttering, and flying, and trilling the songs of spring throughout the unrivalled scene.

"This should have been the Garden of Eden," mused I, as I picked my way down the steep mountain side, resolved to spend one night, at least, in a spot over which, as it seemed, the Spirit of Nature had passed the wand of enchantment.

I reached the valley at the point where the stream took its leave between high, precipitous rocks, and went foaming downward around a sharp angle, but where from my position I could no longer follow it with my eye. Here I stopped to gaze, to wonder, and to admire; and folding my arms upon my breast, I was just beginning to lose myself in a pleasing reverie—with my eyes delightedly fixed upon the green leaves, and grass, and bright flowers, while my ears drank in the music of birds and rushing waters—when I was suddenly startled by a rough voice exclaiming:

"I say, old scalp-lock, hyer's a beaver as ginerally gins every peaceable looking —— red nigger fa'r warning—but arter that, he's jest got to take car' of his ha'r hisself—chaw me!"

I looked up, and no language can describe my feelings, as my eyes rested upon the never-to-be-forgotten features of One-Eyed Sam. He was standing on the hill-side, some twenty yards distant, his body covered by a tree, his neck stretched out so as to give a full view of his face, and with his long, unerring rifle to his shoulder and its muzzle toward my breast.

I was so excited, that for a few moments I could not speak—while my lips quivered, and every limb trembled with emotion.

"You're a orful skeered nigger, anyhow!" he muttered; "and this hyer old coon don't know whether to let you slide, or put lead into your meat-trap."

"Sam!" I yelled at length: "Sam! God bless you, old fellow! would you shoot a friend?"

Sam dropped his rifle with an oath, and never before nor since did I witness such an expression of surprise and amazement as gathered upon his deeply seamed countenance. It appeared as if he could not credit his senses; and without changing his position, he remained staring at me, with his one eye dilated to its greatest dimensions, and his mouth dropped ajar, as if struck dumb in the very act of speaking. What with my long captivity, my long journey through an unknown wilderness, constant peril, anxiety, and fatigue, it may readily be believed I was in no very jocund condition; but the man who could have looked upon the serio-comical face of Sam Botter without laughing, might with propriety be hired out as a mourner, or be apprenticed to an undertaker. As for myself, I was obliged to take a seat and hold my sides for at least two minutes; at the end of which time I found Sam standing by my side, looking almost as much puzzled as ever. At length, uttering a sound, something between the yell of an Indian and the screech of a steam-whistle, he exclaimed:

"Ef it ain't Freshwater, transmogrified to a pig-tail

Injin, may I be chawed up to allergators!—wagh! hagh! wagh!"

"It is me, sure enough, Sam, my old fellow!" cried I, jumping up and grasping his hard hand, which I shook with a vigor.

"And a —— purty looking beast you is, too—wagh! hagh! wagh!" roared the old trapper, now taking his turn at my expense. "Why, your own mother wouldn't know ye from a painted babboon—wagh! hagh! wagh! Ef she would now, chaw this hyer old One-Eyed up for a liar—wagh! hagh! wagh!" and Sam laid down and rolled.

I waited as patiently as I could, till his merriment had subsided; and then inquired, with tremulous anxiety:

"Sam, what of my friends? speak! are they living or dead?"

"Let me git my breath, Freshwater—let this hyer old nigger git his breath; and while I'm gitting it, jest tell me whar you come from, anyhow, with them thar skins, paint and pig-tail!—wagh! hagh! wagh!"

"I have been, for more than a year, a prisoner among the Crows; and a month ago, almost miraculously, I effected my escape."

"You look like you'd been a scare-crow to crows—wagh! hagh! wagh!" roared Sam.

"Come, come," said I, seriously; "reserve your merriment for some more fitting occasion, and answer me truly: Do you know any thing of my friends?"

"Wall, who d'ye mean?"

"First, do you know anything of the girl whom we went to rescue?"

"I knowed some'at to her a year ago."

"Speak! for the love of Heaven! did she escape? is she alive?"

"She got to St. Vrain's alive."

"She did?" cried I: "say that again!"

"She did, Freshwater—chaw me!"

"Thank God! thank God!" cried I, with wild excitement. "And now?—speak of her now!—is she living?"

"Don't know nothing agin it," said Sam.

"She was saved, then! she was saved, poor girl!" I rejoined, almost overpowered with emotion.

"Wall, yes—rayther—expect she war," rejoined Botter, with a peculiar look, which seemed to imply that he had left something untold.

"Speak, Sam!" cried I, earnestly—"has anything gone wrong with her of late?"

"I goes under thar, Freshwater—case this hyer old beaver don't know everything."

"Is she at St. Vrain's now?"

"Nary once."

"How long did she remain there? where did she go on leaving? where is she now? Come, quick—that is a good fellow—answer me! tell me all you know!"

"Freshwater," returned Botter, with emphatic

deliberation, "old One-Eyed sees how it ar'; you jest love that thar gal a heap!"

"Well, suppose I do?"

"Can't blame you much, expect—fur ef she warn't a screamer, then I'm a liar! Augh!"

"Well, go on! go on!"

Sam appeared to be very minutely inspecting the lock of his rifle, as he continued:

"Freshwater, you knows this hyer old coon tuk to you from the word go—you knows that thar is truth, plum center—hey, boy?"

"Yes, you said so, and I have had no reason to think otherwise since. But what has all this to do with my questions?"

"Why, you see, (hesitating and squinting along the barrel of his rifle,) I hate to hurt your feelings—ef I don't, just chaw me up fur a liar!"

"For Heaven's sake, speak! and let me have the worst!" cried I, becoming greatly excited.

"Wall, the wost it is, I jest does believe; fur this hyer old nigger has heerd tell, that when a feller's plum in up to his eyes in love, ef his gal plays tricky, it al'ays fotches him all of a heap—leastways that's what them says as knows more'n old One-Eyed 'bout sich things. Augh!"

"Sam," cried I, "you will get me half crazy before I learn your serious news."

"Kim down then, Freshwater, and take a wet—that's the thing to make a feller spunky—and hyer's one what speaks from experience. I've got a shanty

down the stream a bit, and thar's more'n a quart of the ginewine left—chaw me!"

"For Heaven's sake, speak at once, and relieve me of this suspense! What has happened to Adele?"

"Best take a wet fust."

"I never drink spirits."

"Oh, yes—I'd forgot. Wall, ef you thinks as how you kin hear it, and not spile, hyer's in."

"Yes, yes—proceed!"

"You remember the Greaser Cap'in?"*

"El Doliente? yes! Did he escape?"

"'Spose I begin back to whar you stepped out, and fotch up squar?"

"Be brief then."

"You remember the old hoss kim up, right side up, beautiful, arter he'd been knocked flat to lightning?"

"Yes."

"Wall, arter all the rest of you fellers had put out afoot, to hunt up the critters, I jest got on to old Zig-zag's back, and rid around proud—ef I didn't, why is bufflers skinned? I soon diskivered the Cap'in, and his big, black, woolly nigger, puffing and blowing arter a hoss; and I says, 'Git up hyer, Cap'in—fur hyer's a critter as stands chain lightning beautiful—and so in course us two can't faze him—nary once—chaw me!' Wall, to hurry on—fur I sees you is anxious—the Cap'in got on, and me and him rid till

* Mexicans and Spaniards, are, in contempt, termed Greasers by the border men.

we cotched his hoss; and then we tuk a divide, and made a tall break for the nigger's hoss. We'd jest got his'n, and war going it powerful fur t'others, when we seed the Injins coming like mad, and we held up to do the ginteel. Our fellers was scattered, you know—and the Injins scattered to take em—and we went in arter the red niggers; and it war jest the curiousest mixed up —— mess you ever seed, else you kin chaw me up fur a liar. Augh!

"Wall, to cut the facts plum down, the gist on't's this hyer: We throwed two Injins, and seed three whites lose thar ha'r; and arter this, all the rest being nowhars, we put out fur tall timber. The next night the infarnal imps stole our hosses—and we had to take it afoot to the hills—and a —— long, nice, purty tramp we had on't. Somehow we missed St. Vrain's, and struck the Black Hills above; and while we was hunting our way down, we run agin a white gal, who'd jest sot down to make a die on't. Now when this hyer gal told us who she war—how she and you had got away from the red niggers—and how she'd left you dying, the day afore, up to some cave, or so'-thing—you kin gamble high on to it, Freshwater, that our eyes kim rolling out like peeled inyuns."

"Then you found Adele in the forest?"

"We didn't do nothing shorter."

"And in a dying state?"

"Reckon she'd hev gone under that night, ef we hadn't put deer meat into her."

"Poor Adele! how she must have suffered!" exclaimed I. "But go on with your story."

"Wall, in course we went in fur finding you, dead or alive; and the next day we done some tall walking, taking the gal's back'ard trail. We didn't find the place that day, though—and I reckoned the little critter'd cry her eyes clean out afore morning—she tuk it so bad. Next day arter that, we did find the hole in the rocks; and the gal rushed in like mad; and howled powerful, when she found you warn't thar; though you kin gamble on to it, that she's got over all that thar afore this, or else this hyer old nigger is one of the liars. Augh!"

"Sam!" cried I, somewhat angrily—"what do you mean by these insinuations? Speak out, like a man, and let me hear the worst!"

"Wall, to fotch it plum down to a pint, then, Freshwater, that thar gal tuk on powerful about you fur weeks; and then she got right thick with the Cap'in; and ef thar war a chance fur you arter that, as big as a gooseberry, old One-Eyed couldn't diskiver it—chaw me!"

"She became interested in El Doliente, did she?"

"You kin gamble on to it, Freshwater. He jest tuk to her from the word go, like a hawk does to a chicken; and arter a while she gin in, and they went off together."

"The villain!" I ejaculated. "Now I can understand why he was so anxious to rescue her from the Indians—and why he spent his money so generously

in fitting out the expedition. The black-hearted villain! would to Heaven I had him within reach of this arm!"

"Says I," pursued Botter, "when I seed him talking private to her, and sneaking about wharsomever she put her purty foot—says I, 'Sam, you old one-eyed gentleman, don't you wish Freshwater war hyer to spile this fun?—hey, boy?—and gin that —— Greaser h—l?—hey, boy?'—and Sam said, 'yes, he did!' and we'd agreed together—me and Sam had—that ef you kim to life, afore it war too late, we'd pitch old Greaser into the drink."

"And Adele went off with him?"

"She did, hoss."

"Willingly?"

"Looked that thar way."

"It cannot be she has proved false to me!" said I, rapidly recalling one scene after another of the past.

"No, I don't think as how the gal meant to hurt your feelings—nary once!" pursued Sam, consolingly; "but, you see, Freshwater, she thought you war dead, like all the rest on us did: yes—chaw me!"

"Poor, friendless, alone in the world, perhaps she was not so much to blame!" sighed I.

"She war nothing partickelar oncommon to me," said Sam, with a grave shake of the head; "that is, I mean, she warn't no relation, nor nothing—and it wouldn't hev done fur old One-Eyed to interfere jest fur a dead friend, you see—fur we'd all gin in as how you was rubbed out to painters, or some'at to that

sort: else, chaw me up fur a liar, and bile me turkey-buzzards fur high feeding, ef I wouldn't hev wiped him out, afore he'd hev tuk her a mile without marrying! and a marrying preacher into the fort to that! Augh! augh!"

"Gracious Heaven, Sam!" cried I, grasping his arm; "you do not surely mean ——"

"Wall, thar, boy—thar now—never mind this hyer time, Freshwater!" returned Botter, soothingly, as I paused, unable to finish the sentence. "I told you you'd best tuk a wet fust—case you is weak and thin—and haint eat nothing to-day, I'll gamble my rifle gin a pint; and when a feller's hungry, and weak like, he haint got a good stomach to bad news —nary once—chaw me! Augh! Kim, let's go down to my shanty and hev a feed; and arter that we'll talk agin, sensible."

The terrible suspicions which Botter's words excited —together with my weak condition, and the different emotions I had experienced within the hour—completely overpowered me; and I sunk down upon the earth, feeling more miserable and wretched than I had ever felt before, and sincerely regretting I had lived to find my faith in humanity destroyed. I then believed I could have heard of Adele's death, and borne the blow, as a dispensation of Heaven, with something like Christian fortitude and resignation; but to think that the being I loved had fallen—that an angel of purity had surrounded herself with a dark cloud of sin, which would shut her for ever from the

holy light of Paradise—was a something too horrible to cross my brain, in my weak state, and permit me to conduct myself as a rational being should. I was not completely insane—at least I had a consciousness of my misery, and the evil at work within me—but my brain felt as if it were on fire; and I jumped up, and beat my head with my fists, and might have torn my hair, had I found any within my grasp. Sam was evidently much alarmed, and tried to calm and soothe me—but all in vain, till he struck a chord whose vibrations were felt in my inmost soul, and which had the effect to instantly change the whole current of my thoughts, and seemingly my very nature.

"This is foolish, boy—downright goosey, as I'm a gintleman!" he said, among other things; "and ef I was you, I'd keep my strength, and my temper, till I'd got the villain hisself to pummel, instead of my own noddle—I would—chaw me!"

"Ha! revenge!" shouted I—"revenge! I thank you for the suggestion, Sam!"

"Yes, revenge, ef you like it, Freshwater!" he cried—"revenge on the —— villain as has done you mischief!—anything, by ——! 'cept butting your own brains out fur him to laugh at. Augh!"

"Yes," continued I, "I will live for revenge! I will pursue this villain to the end of the earth, or until I find him; and when found, though kneeling before the sacred altar, I will drag him from it, and the fearful account between us shall be settled with blood!"

"Now you talk sensible, boy; them's my sentiments—that thar's the way this hyer old nigger'd do—chaw me!"

"But can I follow him? can I ascertain whither he has gone with his victim? for Adele *is* his victim, I feel assured."

"You kin try to St. Vrain's, Freshwater."

"And try I will!" said I, setting my teeth hard with my murderous resolve. "Enough, Sam—enough for the present—say not another word—you see I am a man again!"

"Or will be," muttered Botter, turning aside his head and smothering a laugh, "when you git that —— greasy paint rubbed off, and human fixings on to your back agin. But kim along—let's travel: you'll live to see sights yit, you will. Augh!"

As he spoke, Botter turned down the gorge of the mountain, and picked his way over rocks, alongside of the here rushing, roaring stream; and I followed mechanically, thinking only of Adele, her seducer, and revenge. About a hundred yards from where the stream entered this gorge, it turned a sharp angle to the right; and, about the same distance again, it took a similar turn to the left; and so, in a zigzag course, it went foaming and roaring onward, for perhaps half a mile from the green valley above, when it struck a long, thickly wooded level, where its waters spread out to five times its ordinary width and became almost as still as a lake. We quitted the gorge, and turned up the hill to the left; but the

moment we reached a point which commanded a view of the whole scene, Botter stopped, and said:

"Hyer's a spot as has been a purty sight to One-Eyed Sam fur many a week."

"Have you been living here for weeks?" I inquired, in some surprise.

"Expect."

"Ah! yes—I understand—trapping beaver?"

"Them's 'em, Freshwater—and a desperate nice thing I've made on't. You see, arter I'd got back from hunting the gal—which we found so curious—the Cap'in being purty much tickled all round, he gin me a nice fit-out of traps and fixings, and I did some'at to beaver that year, afore all froze, and then kim down to St. Vrain's to winter. Last spring I started 'arly—but found poor picking, till I diskivered this hyer run. Sign war about han'some in these diggins; and so putting my mules to feed in a valley below, I fotched my traps up hyer, knocked up a shanty, and went in. D'ye see them thar beaver lodges over t'other side?"

"I do," I answered, mechanically—for I was not in a mood to be interested in what he was saying—though I thought it best to humor him.

"And d'ye see these hyer stumps, cut off like they was sawed?"

"I do."

"And d'ye mind how still the water is?"

"I do."

"Wall, ye see, the beavers cut down these hyer

trees with their teeth—knocked up a dam down yonder—raised their shanties over the way—and had a —— nice time on't ginerally, till One-Eyed got his old blinker on to 'em, and made thar meat kim to traps. Augh! Kim along, Freshwater, and I'll show you a slight sprinkling to fur—I will—chaw me!"

Saying this, Botter set forward again, and I followed in silence. Proceeding some two hundred yards further, obliquely across the hill, he halted before a thick cluster of bushes, took a sweeping survey of the whole scene, and then, carefully parting the interlocking twigs, pushed in toward the centre, bidding me follow, and be particular to leave the external appearance as we had found it. Penetrating these bushes, which were higher than our heads, we soon came to a hut, constructed of poles, sticks, bark, and skins, and having a door which we could only enter in a stooping posture. Sam looked in, and remarking that all was right, he invited me to follow him, and disappeared. As I crossed the threshhold of his forest domicile, I heard him mutter to himself, as if addressing another:

"Sam, you old sinner, lay low, and keep shady, and you'll see fun, you will. Augh!"

I heard the words, but paid little heed to them. I had no idea then to what he alluded—but the reader will find sufficient explanation in the following chapter

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE OLD TRAPPER'S JOKE.

THE hut, cottage, shanty, or lodge—call it by what name you will—of Sam Botter, was not remarkable for either size, beauty, or cleanliness; and occupying the central point of a large cluster of dwarfed trees, brambles, and bushes, the view immediately around it was hardly such as a poetical florist would have desired. Still it suited the old trapper, and answered the design for which it was erected; and in that, to say the least, it had the advantage of many an edifice of more cost and pretension. The old mountaineer wanted concealment for himself, traps, furs, packs, etc., and shelter from the mountain storms—which are not unfrequently cold and severe, even in mid-summer—and his shanty, as he was wont to term it, served him in every particular. Nothing short of Indian cunning and sagacity could have found it; and no one, without a special motive, would have penetrated ten feet into such a tangled mass of brush and briers.

It was quite primitive in its construction, and had cost but little labor, and less brains. A number of poles, set in a circle of ten feet in diameter, were brought together at the top, fastened with stout thongs, and the interstices filled with brush, sticks,

bark, and stones, and the whole nicely covered with skins of bear, deer, and other animals. It was waterproof overhead, and the door served the triple purpose of admitting the tenant, light, and air. The earth was the floor, covered with dried grass, sweet-scented herbs, skins, and the ordinary utensils of a trapper. The cooking was done in the open air; and the beaver skins, first stretched on a hoop, were dried in the sun; but the shanty was the general storehouse of everything; and Sam, more than once, showed me packs of furs ready for the market; and, with a feeling of exultation, he several times declared, that "old One-Eyed war a rich nigger agin, and all on his own hook."

Having, in a measure, forced me to inspect his forest home and property, he at length said:

"Now, Freshwater, I knows you is tired and hungry; and so you jest plant yourself down hyer, and I'll desperate soon fotch you in some'at to tickle your meat-trap with."

Saying this, the old trapper went out; and, carefully picking his way through the surrounding bushes, disappeared—leaving me alone to my gloomy thoughts and miserable reflections. I threw myself down upon the litter, and was soon lost in a painful reverie. From this abstracted state of mind I was presently aroused, by hearing some one carefully part the bushes and cautiously approach; but supposing it to be Sam, I only thought that now I was about to get food to strengthen my body, and turn my thoughts, for a

short time at least, into a more healthy channel, and perhaps raise in some degree my prostrated nature from the dark gulf of misanthropy and revengeful desire into which it had been so suddenly plunged. Imagine my surprise and astonishment, therefore, on seeing a strange face presented at the door—the face of a white man—accompanied with a body of small stature, dressed in the mountain costume. The face, however, was that of a young man, full of health and energy; and in the dim light, I could discover nothing savage or diabolical in its expression—though the owner carried a rifle in his hand, and a brace of pistols and a hunting knife in his girdle. My first impression was, that he was the associate or partner of Botter; but instantly I remembered having heard the latter assert that he was "trapping on his own hook;" and my next reasonable conjecture was, that he was a mountain neighbor, who had come on a friendly visit to the camp of Sam. From my position inside—being, too, by this time, accustomed to the dim light, I could see him much better than he could me; but he evidently knew I was here; for he stopped at the door, shaded his eyes with his hand, peered into the darker part of the lodge, and said:

"Though armed, I am disposed to be friendly."

"Well, sir, if disposed to be friendly, as you say, pray enter, without fear," I replied. "In the absence of the host, Sam Botter, I take it upon me to say you are welcome."

"Why, how is this?" cried the stranger, springing

into the hut, and endeavoring to get a better view of my face and person.

"Well, sir, is there anything wrong?" said I, getting up and confronting him with an air of dignity, composure, and self-assurance.

"Surely, you are not an *Indian?*" he exclaimed, in some confusion.

"Who said I was, sir?"

"Why, no other than Sam Botter himself."

"You have seen him, then?"

"Yes, not five minutes since—and he told me he had just met an old Indian acquaintance, who had done him a service in times past, and that he was now his guest. He requested me to come up here, and speak kindly to you—but said that, though you could understand me, you spoke English so brokenly, that I must be satisfied to comprehend one word in three."

"Be assured, sir, it is one of Sam's jokes," I rejoined—"of which he is rather fond—as you doubtless know, if as well acquainted with him as myself. No, sir! I am no Indian; though I look like one, in this costume and paint, and with this shaved head. I am a white man from the States, who was captured, more than a year ago, by the Crows; and I have been their prisoner till recently, when I fortunately effected my escape."

"Ah! Sam, you rogue, you shall answer for this trick!" apostrophized the stranger, good humoredly.

"Wagh! hagh! wagh!—wagh! hagh! wagh!" roared Botter, who had drawn near enough to over-

hear our conversation; and "wagh! hagh! wagh!" resounded for several minutes—till, in spite of ourselves, we were forced to join in his uproarious merriment.

"There is no great depth in the joke, after all, Sam," sung out the stranger at length, biting his lips, and evidently feeling chagrined. "Any body who is disposed to make a false statement, can play off a similar trick on his fellows at almost any moment."

"Sold!" roared Sam: "I knowed it—this hyer old nigger'd hev gambled high on to it—sold, you is, boys, or I'm a woodchuck—wagh! hagh! wagh!"

"Let him enjoy his laugh," said I; "it seems to do him good; and I am only sorry that circumstances deprive me of the pleasure of a similar flow of joyous spirits."

As I said this, we heard the crackling of the bushes; and the next moment the old trapper himself appeared upon the scene.

"It's fun, ain't it?" he roared.

"Not so very remarkably funny either," replied the stranger.

"Ef it don't kill me, I'll live ten year longer fur it—chaw me!" said Sam.

"If it will prolong your life, you are welcome to my part in the performance," said I.

"But the best of the joke you don't see—wagh! hagh! wagh!" roared Sam again.

"It is very likely we do not," returned the stranger, a little testily; "since what we do see, appears too

stupid for a man of sense to laugh at." Then turning to me, he continued: "So you have just escaped from a painful captivity?"

"I have, God be thanked!" I replied.

"You must have suffered a great deal?"

"No one knows how much!"

"Were you badly treated?"

"It was not so much the treatment I received, as the fact of being a prisoner among a people between whom and myself there was not a single link of sympathy, and the thought that I might be doomed to spend my days there, without ever again beholding my friends, which caused my suffering and misery. The torture of the body, sir, is as nothing compared with the torture of the mind."

"That is true," sighed the other. "I have felt both, and know your observation to be true."

"Were you ever a captive?"

"Never; but I have known what it was to feel the pangs and attendant miseries of a bodily disease, supposed to be incurable; and at the very moment when certain recovery had made my spirit buoyant with bright and glorious anticipations, I have known what it was to lose, by worse than ordinary death, the only friend I truly loved save one on earth; and the mental anguish caused by this, I do assure you, threw far into the shade all I had before experienced of wretchedness."

"Yet better, far better, your friend should die, than live to be lost to you for ever through sin and crime!"

said I, somewhat irrelevantly and abstractedly, as the image of Adele floated up through my recollection, like a beautiful picture covered with a black vail.

"I do not understand you," said my new acquaintance.

"No! how should you? since it has probably never been your misfortune to know the baseness and wickedness of the human heart; but believe me, sir, there can come no heavier blow—no keener pang—to the upright, trusting, confiding, loving heart, than to suddenly learn that the being he most trusted, most confided in, most loved, has proved unworthy of his regard; and that where he built his hopes of happiness, in the expectation of finding the holy light and virtue of an angel, he now stops to mourn above a dismal wreck of sin and crime; and is led to doubt if any can be true, since such an one has fallen. But speaking of friends," continued I, with a sudden start, as, for the first time since meeting the old trapper, the thought of poor Varney flashed upon my recollection —"I too have, or had, a friend—and Heaven pardon me for having, during the excitement of crushing news, forgotten to inquire his fate. Botter —"

"Hush!" said Sam, who, his mirth having subsided, was now standing by my side, and listening to our conversation: "Hush!" and he put his finger to his lips mysteriously, and drew me aside. "I knows who you mean, Freshwater," he whispered in my ear; "you mean Shadbones; but hush! don't mention him! and I'll tell you why afore long—I will—chaw me!"

"Sam," returned I, nervously clutching his arm, and addressing him in a whisper also, "is he a villain too?"

"Nary once."

"What then?"

"Gone under!" was the doleful rejoinder.

"Ah! poor fellow! poor fellow! it is then as I feared;" and the tears rushed to my eyes. "But why do you not wish me to speak of him, Sam?"

"Hush, now—do—I'll tell you afore long—ef I don't, you kin chaw me up fur a liar.—Augh!"

"Very well, I will wait," said I, giving vent to my grief in tears that I could not repress.

For some time the conversation dropped on all sides; but evidently finding the silence somewhat embarrassing, and perhaps with the view also of withdrawing my thoughts from a painful subject, the young stranger resumed, in a tone that showed his heart was alive to sympathy, although he might not intrude it upon my private grief.

"You say you are from the States—do you think of returning soon?"

"Such was my intention, sir, till I heard, from my friend Botter here of the villainy of one I had supposed my friend; but since then I have hardly been myself, and really do not know what I shall decide upon when I reach a point where I can learn more of the real facts of the case. I am not naturally of a revengeful disposition—and would, as a general thing, much rather leave the guilty to the punishment which

is sure to follow, either soon or late, the transgression of God's moral law; but, in the present instance, I have not only been wronged irreparably—but a being, whom I loved more than life, has been ruined, body and soul; and I feel it would only be justice to rid the earth of a demon incarnate, and send him to his eternal reckoning."

"Them's my sentiments," rejoined Botter, with an oath.

"And yet," said the other, "it is a fearful thing to take human life, except in self-defence. Have you duly considered that, by such an act, your own peace of mind would be for ever destroyed? to say nothing of the penalties attached to the transgression of human laws?"

"I have hardly considered anything," I replied; "but as to my peace of mind, I feel it is destroyed already."

"You think so now—but time will bring a change. Grief may be assuaged; but remorse has a barbed point, which once buried in the soul may rankle forever."

"I shall doubtless be guided by circumstances; and at present I am not in a condition to say, positively, what I shall, or shall not, do."

"Are you certain of all the treachery and deceit to which you allude?"

"All I know, I have gathered from Botter here—let him answer."

"All I've told him, I've powerful good reason fur

believing ar' true as that this hyer old hoss is a —— bad sinner hisself," replied Sam, emphatically.

"In such a case, one should not only believe, but know!" rejoined the other.

"It is my intention to visit St. Vrain's Fort," said I, "and act upon the evidence which I may there receive; though, after all, it may be necessary for me to first return to the States, in order to procure the means to carry out my half-formed design. It is true, I left some money in the hands of Bent, when I stopped at his fort, on the Arkansas, something more than a year ago; but if that was not safely trusted, I have nothing in this part of the world I can claim, except what you see upon me—the Indians have despoiled me of all the rest."

"You will find William Bent an honorable man, and kind-hearted," replied my new acquaintance, with something like enthusiasm. "If you left money in his possession, my life on it, it will be returned the moment you call for it. I was there, a year ago last summer, in very bad health, on my way to the mountains; and being compelled by sickness to remain there for two or three weeks, I can testify to the goodness of his heart, from the kind, almost fatherly, treatment which I received at his hands, and those of his immediate household."

"It is something of a curious coincidence," I rejoined, "that I was there, a year ago last summer, and left a sick friend under his charge, who was also on his way to the mountains for the recovery of his

health; and of whom your voice, and manner, and style of conversation, forcibly remind me. But my friend, I have just learned from Botter, is dead; and as you are living, and apparently in good health, the coincidence ends with what I have stated. Sam," continued I, turning to Botter, who now had his back toward me, and was looking out through the door, "you may as well speak now, and tell me how and where my dear friend met his end! Did he reach the mountains? or did he die at the fort?"

"He got to the mountains alive, and lived to see sights, I reckon," answered the trapper.

"Did the half breed go with him?"

"Expect."

"Was he with him when he died!"

For some reason, which will soon be apparent, Botter did not reply to this question; but the muscles of his face seemed to work convulsively—and more than once, I noticed, he covered his mouth with his hand, in a manner somewhat mysterious.

"He has a kind heart," I thought, "and is really affected at the loss of poor Varney;" and with a feeling of gloom and grief, I was about to throw myself down upon the litter, resolved to break off the conversation and commune only with my own sad thoughts for the present, when my attention was arrested by the singular conduct of the stranger.

Springing suddenly to Botter, he seized and turned him round; and for a moment, looked eagerly, almost wildly, into his face; and then, bounding to me, he

caught me by the arm, and fairly dragged me to the door; where, in the stronger light, I underwent the same rapid and eager scrutiny. Wondering what all this portended, and half inclined to think the stranger demented, I looked full into his bronzed face and dark eyes. It was the first time I had done so in a light sufficient to distinctly reveal every lineament; and I started to perceive an expression there peculiar to one I was mourning as dead.

"Your name?" he gasped.

"Roland Rivers."

"Great God! is it possible? and I am Alfred Varney!"

The next moment we were locked in each other's embrace, and stood trembling, and almost overpowered, with emotions which no language might express.

"Wagh! hagh! wagh!" roared Sam; "d'ye see the joke now, boys?—d'ye see it now, like old One-Eyed does?—wagh! hagh! wagh!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

SERIOUS SPECULATIONS.

WILD, thrilling and rapturous were the sensations which Varney and I experienced, as each so suddenly and unexpectedly discovered and clasped to his heart a friend supposed to be no more. To attempt to describe our emotions, and impart to the reader a tithe of what we felt, would be worse than vain; and so I will only request him to take into consideration our peculiar temperaments, the strength of our attachments, the length of time since our parting, the perils and hardships we had encountered, the belief of each that the other was dead, together with our strange meeting in a lonely wilderness—and with all these facts duly considered, he may form some faint idea of the feelings which stirred the inmost depths of our souls as we stood clasped in each other's embrace.

"Is it possible this can be my dear friend, Roland Rivers!" exclaimed Varney at length, starting back and looking eagerly into my face.

"Rather let me say, is it possible this can be Alfred Varney! the pale, emaciated, consumptive friend, whom I left at Bent's, lying upon what I feared would be his bed of death! No wonder, with your full, bronzed face, and robust frame—seen unexpectedly in this dim light—that I did not recognize you, even

though your voice had a familiar sound; and then Sam took care to destroy my faintest suspicion, by telling me you were dead."

"Fun, ain't it?" roared Sam. "I knowed thar'd be fun, when I diskivered Freshwater up to t'other valley. Yes, ye see, boys, I says to myself, says I, 'Sam, you old beaver, you kin fotch Freshwater and Shadbones together mysterious—and you kin git fun out on 'em—and ef you don't do it, Sam, you old one-eyed nigger, then you ought to jest let 'em chaw you up fur a liar'—wagh! hagh! wagh! Wall, when I got to my shanty hyer, I left you, Freshwater, to hunt Shadbones—fur I knowed he warn't fur off, case it war nigh feeding time—and he's powerful to eat now, is that same Shadbones—and so when I seed him, I sent him up hyer to do the ginteel to my Injun friend—wagh! hagh! wagh!"

"But how is it I find you here with Sam?" inquired I of Varney. "Come, sit down, and tell me your story."

"Yes, go in, Shadbones, and I'll fix you up some beaver tails, and call it squar'—I will—chaw me!" said Botter, who immediately started out, leaving us to ourselves.

The story of Varney, which occupied a couple of hours in narration, I shall abridge. After our parting at Bent's Fort, he remained there a couple of weeks, and then resumed his journey, accompanied by the half-breed, in the double capacity of guide and servant. He reached Pueblo without accident, and spent

a month at the fort, hoping I would join him; and then, his health having in some measure improved, he joined a party of hunters, and ascended the range of mountains known as the Three Parks, and of which his present locality formed a part. Once upon the mountains, he began to experience a remarkable change in his system; and soon discovered, by unmistakable signs, that his lungs were healing,* and his joy at this discovery may readily be imagined. He spent the fall, and a portion of the winter, in riding, hunting, and fishing—sometimes in company with a strong party, and sometimes with only his guide for his companion—and toward spring made his way to St. Vrain's Fort, where he encountered Botter, and from his lips gathered all that was known of my history. He here learned that El Doliente and Adele had gone together toward the south; but no one knew, or appeared the least interested in knowing, their destination, though the tongue of scandal was not idle concerning their moral characters. As to myself, it was believed that I was dead. The girl stated that I had been delirious; and it was supposed that, after she

* "It is an extraordinary fact, that the air of the mountains has a wonderful restorative effect upon constitutions enfeebled by pulmonary diseases; and of my own knowledge, I could mention *a hundred* instances where persons, whose cases have been pronounced, by eminent practitioners, perfectly hopeless, have been restored to comparatively sound health, by a sojourn in the pure and bracing air of the Rocky Mountains; and are now alive, to testify to the effects of the reinvigorating climate."—RUXTON'S ADVENTURES IN MEXICO AND THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

left me, I had wandered away, in a state of delirium, and perished, and been devoured by wild beasts—the effect of which news on my friend was for a time very severe.

On arriving at St. Vrain's, it had been Varney's intention to return to the States during the ensuing summer; but fearing a relapse, and believing one more season on the mountains would effect a permanent cure, he had easily been prevailed on by Botter to accompany him on a trapping expedition, which was to end at the commencement of cold weather. Botter had been successful beyond his expectations. The valley where they were now located, had been discovered early in the summer; and here the old trapper had built his hut, and fixed his head quarters; though he had since trapped on all the streams within fifty miles, and had sometimes been absent for days at a time. Varney had sometimes accompanied him, and had sometimes remained alone while he was away; and had passed his time pleasantly, in hunting and fishing, while Sam was busy looking after his traps. The time for setting out on their return to some one of the wilderness forts, was now near at hand; and only the day previous to my arrival, the old mountaineer had announced his intention of gathering up his traps and furs, pulling up stakes, and making a bee line for Pueblo within a week.

Such was the substance of what I gathered from Varney—his story being interrupted more than once by Botter—who, during the narration, brought us in a

well cooked dish of beaver-tails, which proved a most delicious repast, and to which I certainly did ample justice. Having heard Varney's story, I proceeded to relate my own—and both he and Botter sat and listened to me with manifest interest. When I had brought my narrative to the point where I had so unexpectedly met Botter, the old trapper characteristically observed:

"Freshwater, thar's no use in saying you hain't been in some desperate tight places; but ef you was ever nigher being rubbed out, than when old One-Eyed Sam had his squint along the barrel of this hyer rifle, all I've got to say is, you've went through a tighter squeeze than ary nigger this hyer old coon ever heerd tell on. Yes sir-ee—a heap—chaw me! Augh!"

"You did really intend to shoot me then?" said I.

"I kim so nigh to it, that I don't know why I didn't—fur it's a settled pint with me, to raise red-nigger's ha'r wharsomever I find it; and ef you wasn't a red-nigger to old Sam jest about then, then hyer's what never seed snakes."

"The same good Providence which has ever watched over me, saved me from your murderous design," I rejoined.

"Don't know 'bout that thar—but I reckon it war the skeer in you as made me hold up," said Sam, dryly.

"I was not so scared as excited," I replied.

"Wall, it had a powerful look to skeer, to this old

possum," rejoined Botter, with a laugh. "The fact is, I thought you'd die to skeer, and save powder—ef I didn't, may I never tell the truth agin! Augh!"

"Well, I was saved, and am here, and I thank God for it!" I rejoined. "And now, to change the subject, pray tell me, Alfred, what you think of the conduct of El Doliente and Adele?"

"I hardly know what to think, Roland. I have never seen the girl, you know; but from all you have told me of her, I have good reason to suppose her innocent of the sin laid to her charge."

"But why did she set off alone with the Spaniard?"

"What was she to do? Without home, without friends, believing you to be dead, what object could she have in remaining in a wilderness fortress, surrounded by rough, vulgar, uncouth beings, who could have little or no sympathy with one so pure, refined, and intelligent? It would naturally be her desire to get among the people of her race and religion; and El Doliente may have generously afforded her the opportunity, and taken her for the time under his protection. We should never condemn our friends, and especially those we love, without positive proof of guilt!"

"You give me hope!" cried I, grasping his hand; "and I thank God there is one to speak in her defence! Poor Adele! it is wrong to censure her without proof positive of wrong—and if ever being loved, I know her heart was mine."

"And that love has sustained and saved her, rest

assured, my dear Roland—even supposing the snares of temptation to have been thrown around her."

"Oh! do you think so, Alfred?"

"Sincerely and truly."

"But she believes me dead."

"Then, with her belief, she may fancy you present with her in spirit—and true love dies not."

"Oh! Great God! let not these bright hopes be raised, to be suddenly destroyed!" I prayed. "But I must find her, Alfred—I must find her; I must know the truth; and till then I shall never rest in peace. How can this be done? what shall I do? She may have gone to Mexico; but how shall I ascertain whither she has gone? and how follow her? since, if I recover the money I left at Bent's, my means will still be very limited."

"I have some which is at your service."

"But you must go with me."

"There may be enough for both, if we use prudence and economy."

"Tell you what 'tis, Freshwater," put in Sam—"you're a trump—and trumps war al'ays skeerce when this hyer old nigger gambled high; and so whensomever I got a trump, d'ye see, I al'ays held tight on to it, and val'ed it powerful; and being's I val'e you some'at—and you've did me a good turn by-gone—why, I'll jest turn these hyer beaver skins into tin, and you kin take the pile and slide. Augh!"

"Sam," cried I, seizing his horny hand, "you have a soul!"

"Hev I?" said Sam, simply; "wall, that's what a Gospel preacher tell'd me once; but —— my old weather-beaten carcass, ef ever I seed it, or knows whar it ar'! No sir-ee—chaw me!"

"But should I borrow your money, what would you do through the winter?"

"Make Injun fixings, and sell 'em to the traders—and next spring thar's more beaver."

"I thank you for the offer, and may accept of it; but depend upon it, if I do take your money, and live to return to the States, you shall never have reason to complain of a bad investment."

"Don't know what that thar is," pursued Sam; "but if it's ary thing to kivering, you needn't mind gitting it—fur this hyer old One-Eyed never war much to flummery, gew-gaws, and gim-cracks—nary once. Augh!"

"What course had I better pursue first?" I inquired of Varney.

"I think we had better go to Pueblo first, and there make inquiries—as it is very likely, if the parties went to Mexico, that they stopped there on their way."

"You think, then, I should gain nothing by going first to St. Vrain's?"

"It would certainly cause much delay, and I think would be without any corresponding advantage."

"Well, I will be guided by you, my friend; and for Pueblo we will set out, as soon as Sam shall say ready."

"Two days more, Freshwater—jest gin this hyer old woodchuck two days to git ready in—and then we'll all tramp han'some—we will. But mought I gin you a bit of advice?"

"Certainly, Sam."

"Then jest you go in, and rub off that thar Injun grease—chop off that thar —— old pigtail— put a skin kivering over your noddle, and git your body inside to human fixings; fur if you don't look like the devil now, you do like one of his imps; and the next white gintleman as fotches his piece to b'ar on you, mought spile your meat-trap. Augh! Thar's the stuff fur you! (pointing to a heap of miscellaneous articles)—thar's a cougar skin to make a cap on; thar's a blanket you can toggle into a hunting frock; thar's dressed deer-skin fur your breeches; and you kin gamble high on to it, that you won't look no worser fur transmogrifying yourself from a red-nigger into a white gintleman. Hey! Shadbones?"

"I think the change would improve his appearance," laughed Varney, "and I will assist him to make it. No wonder I did not sooner recognize him."

"And I'll jest take a tramp, to look arter my muleys," said Sam, catching up his rifle and setting off forthwith.

The moment we were again left to ourselves, I hastened to inquire of Varney concerning one whom a feeling of delicacy had prevented my mentioning in the presence of a third party.

"What of her you love, my friend? what of Mary Edwards?" I said.

"I have heard nothing of her since we parted," was his reply; "but if she is living, and God spares my life, I hope to see her again ere long."

"Are you still as much attached to her as when we first met?"

"Yes—my heart has undergone no change since. How could it, Roland? I loved her then, and true love changes not by absence. It was for her I sought to prolong my life; and without her, I fear that life would now be valueless."

"But if she has heard nothing from you, what more reasonable than for her to suppose you dead?"

"I have often fancied that she is mourning me as one no longer among the living," replied Varney, somewhat dejectedly. "Sweet Mary! with what trembling hope have I looked forward to our meeting!"

"Are you sure of her heart, Alfred?"

"What do you mean?" he quickly demanded.

"Are you sure of her love? Bear in mind, that nothing passed between you on this subject! and she may be ignorant of the affection she inspired—and, because of this, may have turned her thoughts to another—for love, to be lasting, must be conscious of reciprocity."

"You startle me, Roland! Surely, she must have known I loved her! for she could not but have seen it in my every action."

"Yet love is exacting, and requires more assurance

than friendship; and moreover, she may think you no longer among the living. Pardon me, if I say any thing to give pain, or even uneasiness! but should any thing have happened, I think you would bear it better if in a measure prepared for the blow."

"Speak out, Roland!" cried Varney, nervously grasping my arm, and looking eagerly and anxiously into my face.

"Suppose you find Mary Edwards the wife of another?"

He released my arm—staggered back—and, sitting down, remained silent for some minutes.

"God forbid!" he exclaimed at length; "God forbid! for then indeed might I wish for that death I have so long, and anxiously, and even painfully, labored to shun! Enough! my dear friend—enough! You mean me well, I know; but let us speculate no more on a matter that is life or death to me!"

The subject dropped then, nor was it resumed for a long time after. What I had said, had the effect to dampen the spirits of Varney, so that at times he was very sad and gloomy; and I should have regretted giving him the least pain, only for the reasons stated to him, that I feared he might possibly find a change, which, coming upon him suddenly, and without previous preparation, might be productive of more serious consequences.

We spent the two succeeding days in getting ready for our departure. I employed most of the time in effecting a much desired change in my personal ap-

pearance, and Varney assisted me; while Botter kept himself busy, in scraping and drying some newly taken beaver skins, and in repairing his mule saddles, sacks and straps, collecting his traps and camp utensils, and packing all snugly for safe transportation.

It may not be amiss, in this connection, to mention the mode of catching the beaver, which confers the name of trapper upon such as make a living by this occupation. Large steel traps are baited with an oily substance, taken from the scrotum of the beaver itself, and placed in the "run" of the animal, under water. A chain, attached to the trap, is then made fast to a picket, or sapling, on the bank; while a cord connects with a stick, which floats on the water—so that, in case the beaver gets away with the trap, its locality may be readily discovered. The bait, called "medicine," the beaver scents while under water; and being curious to know what it is, and why it is there, he hovers about the trap, till accidentally he springs it with his foot and is caught. He is thence taken out by the trapper and skinned; and his skin, scraped and stretched on a hoop, is dried in the sun, and thus prepared for the market—while his tail is carefully put aside as a *bonne bouche.*

Everything being prepared for our journey, we set out at daylight for Pueblo, on the third morning after my arrival. Varney had one mule, and Botter two; but as the trapper's animals were both well laden, we took turns in riding the beast of Varney. We had pleasant weather all the way, though at times very

cold; and in five days we reached Pueblo, without accident or incident worthy of note.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

NEWS FROM HOME.

Pueblo de San Carlos, or Village of St. Charles, as it is called, is a small, square fort, built of adobes, with a wall about eight feet high, which stands on the left bank of the Arkansas, at no great distance from the base of the mountains. It is occupied by Indian traders, *coureurs des bois*, and mountaineers, with their Indian and Mexican wives and children; and at the time I visited it, I could not discover that its tenants were remarkable for either beauty, cleanliness, intelligence or refinement. They were about as civil, however, as tame bears—and this was as much, perhaps, as I had a right to expect.

On pushing my inquiries here, I finally learned, from a respectable looking half-breed, that more than a year ago, two persons, answering the description of El Doliente and Adele, accompanied by a negro, had made a short halt at the fort, and employed a guide to conduct them to Santa Fe. This intelligence, which to me was of great importance, was all I could gather; and as may readily be believed, I was more

eager to extend my journey to a point where I might possibly obtain more definite information.

"If I only had the means," said I to Varney, "to-morrow should see me *en route* to the capital of New Mexico."

"Would to Heaven I had enough for both!" he replied.

"We must go first to Bent's," I rejoined; "and if I can recover the money I left there, I think, with what you have, and proper economy, we shall be able to travel respectably among civilized people, at least for a time."

"You knows what this hyer old hoss told ye up to the mountains, I expect, Freshwater!" observed Botter, who chanced to overhear my remark.

"I do; and I thank you, from my heart, for your generous offer, Sam; but if I can get along without touching your hard earnings, I would rather do so."

"It'll be all the same to old One-Eyed Sam afore spring—you kin gamble on to that thar!" he rejoined, good humoredly. "Every dollar this hyer nigger gits, is greased beautiful; and the way they slides through these hyer old j'ints, is a caution to old Kaintuck. Augh!"

Varney traded his mule for a horse, and purchased another for me; and the second morning after reaching the Pueblo, we set off for Bent's Fort, distant about seventy miles. We camped out one night, and reached our destination before dark of the second day, in good bodily condition. Here I met with a sur-

prise, which gave me both pleasure and pain—being no less than a letter from my father, accompanied with a heavy purse of gold.

Having never written home since the letter dated on board the steamer Missouri, which the reader doubtless remembers—and having mentioned in that, that I contemplated going as far west as Bent's Fort—my father had become extremely anxious concerning my long absence and silence, and had actually dispatched a messenger to this point in quest of me. The messenger had remained here a month—and had gone back with a belief that I was no longer among the living—but had left the purse of gold and letter with Mr. Bent, to be put in my possession, in case I should be heard of within a couple of years. The epistle of my father, even before I broke the seal, excited strange and powerful emotions; and with a trembling hand, and something like a guilty conscience, I tore it open, and read as follows:

"My dear Son!—If ever you see these lines, you will learn that your parents are almost broken-hearted, on account of your long absence and silence. If living, may you never feel the keen pang of disappointment we all felt—but your mother and myself especially—on the receipt of your letter from Missouri, which told us you were about to cross the plains to Bent's Fort, and would not be with us on your birthday. From that moment I have been growing old—and with that intelligence my fondest hope perished. Why did you leave me at such a time? You know

how much I counted on retiring from business, and seeing you duly installed my successor! I could not think of continuing the business any longer; and so, on your twenty-first anniversary—you not being present—the establishment of your father, and which might have been yours, passed into the hands of your brothers-in-law—who, for reasons that I will explain, if ever I see you, have changed the firm of Rivers & Co. to that of Colden and Sharp. If you want to know more, Mr. Spencer, the agent I send out to find you, will inform you. I also send you a thousand dollars in gold, not knowing what your wants may be. Oh! my son, if among the living, do come home, and all shall be forgiven. I found, from your letter, that the life I had proposed for you was not to your liking: you should have told me of this before you left. It has been a great disappointment to me—but let that pass. If I ever get you with me again, I think I shall be quite happy, comparatively speaking. Colden and Sharp are worthy young men, and have good judgment and business tact. Your friends are all usually well, except your mother, who frets a good deal about you, which wears upon her. *All* send love, and so I need not specify. Will you not come home, and make all our hearts glad? Your affectionate father, &c."

To this epistle, which bore date the preceding March, there was a postscript, which said a volume in a few words.

"Roland, my son, God bless you! If you are

alive, I know you will hasten home, and make happy the heart of your now unhappy mother."

The hand that had penned these lines was my mother's, and that hand had trembled so as to make the writing nearly illegible, and there was the stain of a tear upon the page. As I finished reading the whole, I handed the letter in silence to Varney; and sinking down upon a seat, my overcharged heart found some relief in a flood of tears.

"What do you now propose, my friend?" inquired Varney, when I had in a great degree regained my usual composure.

"I must go home, Alfred. I must set out immediately too. Mr. Spencer has returned—and even now my parents are mourning me as dead. Heaven help me! Should my disobedience—for I can call it by no other term—be the means of shortening the days of my dear mother, I shall never forgive myself—shall never be happy again."

"I fear I am much to blame for all this," said Varney, sadly.

"You, my dear friend? no!" cried I, grasping his hand. "It is I, and I alone, that am to blame."

"But you know I was anxious to have you go with me, Roland!"

"But, at the same time, I remember you urged me to do only what I thought best, and I thought best to go. No, Varney, do not accuse yourself of leading me astray, or I shall have more to regret than now."

"But had it not been for me, you might not have come hither!"

"Say rather, had it not been for my own desire. Did I not contemplate making such a journey before I left home? long ere I saw you, or knew you had an existence? What folly, Alfred, to reflect upon yourself, in a case in which, to say the most, you have only been an accessory after the fact."

"But even that is criminal in law."

"Only when the original deed is criminal, remember, and amenable to the law! But enough of this, my friend! There is no analogy between the fact, as it stands, and the figure by which we have chosen to represent it—and so let the subject drop. We are all creatures of circumstance; and a train of circumstances, which nothing human could foresee, have placed me here at a period remote from my intentions. If I have erred—and God, who knows all things, only knows whether I have done wrong to myself and those who gave me being,—if I have erred, I say, I must now endeavor to retrieve the error, as much as possible, by setting forth immediately upon my return to those who are mourning me as dead."

"Then you will not endeavor to find Adele?"

"Ah! Adele—sweet Adele! how that name thrills through my soul! Alfred, you love—you know what love is—advise me—what shall I do? Shall I attempt to find her? and if so, for what purpose? to what end? To know her the wife of another—that would be terrible. To know her the victim of a vil-

lain—that would be worse. In either case, I should be more miserable, perhaps, than I am now—and Heaven knows I am very far from being happy at this moment."

"Then, as soon as you like, we will set off across the plains for Independence."

"You think such a course best, Alfred, all things considered?"

"All things considered, I do. You might not find Adele, should you seek her; and if found, the happiness you seek might not be found with her."

"It is settled then—let us inquire when the next train goes eastward!" said I.

But it was not settled—at least not settled as I had supposed. I believe, to some extent, in destiny; and it was my destiny, ere long, to gather such intelligence as, in one sense, almost compelled me, in my vacillating state of mind—swayed as it was by every strong emotion—to change my design. On making inquiries, I learned among other matters of interest to me, that El Doliente had been here with Adele; that he had left full pay for such of the party as had gone with him in quest of the girl, and had not returned, and were not known to have been killed by the Indians; that the conduct of both had been such as to win the esteem and love of the high-minded; that Adele had more than once mentioned my name, but always with tears; and that both had set out for Santa Fe, by way of Pueblo, and expected to spend a few days with the Governor of New Mexico. Add to

this, that I found here the very person—a Mexican—who had been hired at Pueblo to guide them to Santa Fe; that he stated he had seen them cordially received by Governor Armijo and his family; and that he spoke of El Doliente as a gentleman, and of Adele as one of the kindest and most beautiful ladies he had ever met: add these facts to the foregoing, I say, and take everything into consideration, and I think the reader will not be surprised at my putting off my journey homeward, till I had made another in a contrary direction, and gathered further tidings of one who still held the first place in my affection.

"Alfred," said I, "you must by this time be aware that your companion is a man of whims, without stability of purpose. Already have I again changed my plan. I am now resolved upon a journey to Santa Fe; but I will not be so selfish as to ask you to accompany me; for now that you have been led to look upon a speedy return to the States as a matter of certainty, it would be cruel to drag you away upon a long journey of hardship and peril—a journey—"

"Stop!" cried Varney, interrupting me: "you have said enough, unless your object be to give offence. I trust, whatever may be my imperfections, ingratitude is not one of them. I have not forgotten how you stood by me in my distress, when I had not another friend to call upon; and if I desert you now, may my limbs wither, and my heart turn to stone!"

It being now finally settled that we should depart for Santa Fe, I lost no time in making further im-

provements in my personal appearance, by purchasing and donning a still more civilized costume than I had been able to manufacture from the materials furnished by the old trapper. I did not succeed in getting what might be termed a citizen's dress—but only a slight improvement on the mountaineer's—yet it was so much superior to the patched articles I laid aside, that I looked into a hand mirror with pride, and really felt quite fashionable. My hair—or rather the want of it—was a source of considerable annoyance for a time; but I finally succeeded in purchasing, of a Canadian Frenchman, a respectable looking wig, which put my mind at ease on that point. Thus renewed, in the outer man at least—and having recovered my money, hired the guide of El Doliente, and settled everything to my satisfaction—we bade adieu to Bent's Fort, and hastened back to Pueblo, where we stopped to lay in some provisions, that we might not be hindered by being compelled to hunt game for food. Here I saw Botter for the last time; and after informing him of all that had occurred, he replied, in his characteristic manner:

"Chaw me up fur a liar, Freshwater, but your old dad's some punks! A thousand shiners, hey? Why, riddle my old carcass with ramrods, ef it wouldn't take this hyer old one-eyed nigger a desperate spell to fotch in enough beaver to them thar! yes-sir-ee! And all fur nothing! He's a trump—you kin gamble high on to him, boy; and I'm glad on't; fur you is some'at to a younker, and not nigh so green as you

was—nary once. Augh! And so the Cap'in left the tin fur the boys, hey? fur them as didn't git rubbed out? Wall, that thar war decent, Freshwater—hey! Shadbones?—yes-sir-ee—chaw me! Wall, may be he wasn't sich a —— rascal arter all—hope he wasn't."

"They gave him an excellent character at Bent's," I rejoined.

"Wall, I 'spect he's got white blood into him, and knows what decency is; but ef he didn't love that thar gal, Freshwater, harder nor nary mule kin kick, then chaw me up fur a liar! and call this hyer old beaver a one-eyed —— old woodchuck! Augh! wagh! shagh!"

"Are you certain, Sam?"

"I seed it, Freshwater—old One-Eyed seed it—yes-sir-ee! And he knowed she war your meat, too—ef he didn't, why was eyes made? But he mought hev thought you war rubbed out, d'ye see? which all on us did, you know."

"And Adele?" inquired I, nervously: "did she seem to return his passion?"

"Not to fust—nary once; but I reckon she gin in afore she left."

"I hardly know whether to think him a villain or not!" said I, greatly troubled and perplexed. "There has been mystery about the whole affair, from beginning to end. When I first mentioned her, he got excited; in listening to her history, he acted like a madman; and ever after, even in fitting out the expedition and going in quest of her, he displayed an

interest in her fate and fortune which is unaccountable."

"You jest ought to heerd him go on, when he found the Injins had got the best of us, and knowed thar wasn't nary chance to gitting the gal away!" said Botter—"fur, in course, he didn't know as she'd put out with you. Chaw me, Freshwater—but, fur a leetle while, he made all howl beautiful. Augh!"

"Well, it is all very strange, and I know not what to think," said I. "If I can ascertain that he really loves the girl, and has made her his wife, I shall retire, without disturbing their happiness, and return home a sadder, and perhaps a wiser, man; but if I find he has wronged Adele Loyola, then will I pray to be set face to face with him, and let God judge between us!"

"Them's 'em!" returned Sam. "Go in, Freshwater! I'll gamble on to you."

At the final parting, Botter shook hands with both Varney and myself; and, for an old mountaineer, used to all kinds of changes and vicissitudes, he seemed not a little affected.

"Good-by, boys!" he said, in a rather unsteady voice; "and as this hyer old nigger's Kaintuck dad used to say—may your meat never run out, nor your corn-crib git low! Expect it 'aint like you'll ever see this hyer old One-Eyed agin—nary once—chaw me! Augh! But ef we don't never meet agin, I hope you won't forgit as how we've all been in whar blood was

drawed, and hev seed snakes afore now; and ef you've got a stray thought to spar', you'll let her slide to the mountains, whar she'll find old Sam cotching beavers and raising ha'r till he goes under."

"God bless you, Sam!" said I, shaking his honest hand heartily: "while memory lasts, you will not be forgotten by me!"

"Let me echo the words of my friend!" said Varney, with feeling.

"Chaw me!" rejoined the old trapper, turning away, and bringing his hand quickly across his eye. "I haint felt so womanish sence Wolfy quit to the —— Pawnees—nary once. Augh! Wall, good-by, boys! and hyer's a old one-eyed beaver as will travel fur a wet. Augh! augh!"

With this Sam turned abruptly away, and disappeared within the fort. We never saw him again.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A LONG JOURNEY.

WELL mounted and armed, with our Mexican guide and a pack-mule, we left Pueblo de San Carlos, one cold, raw day, and soon struck into a mountainous region, in one of whose valleys we made our first camp, the cold being very intense. But as it is not my purpose to give a detailed account of our journey to Santa Fe, I will merely remark, that we arrived

safely at the then dirty capital of New-Mexico, in something less than two weeks from crossing the Arkansas—having passed more than one night in a snow storm, and suffered severely from the cold. To say I was disappointed and disgusted with the appearance of the town, will only be to tell about half of the truth, and add my testimony to that of every foreigner visiting it for the first time. It contained, at this period, a miserable population of some two or three thousand—a mongrel collection of Mexicans, Indians, and negroes, with a few foreigners, mostly traders—none of whom could boast of anything better than a mud dwelling, and a large portion of whom lived in huts hardly fit to be classed with respectable dog-kennels. There was one exception—the palacio, or palace, of the Governor—a long, low building, with adobe walls, which occupied nearly one side of the Grande Plaza, or principal square, and which displayed a colonnade of rough pine pillars. I have since seen the town compared to a dilapidated brick-kiln, or prairie dog-town, and I think the comparison does it ample justice. Having passed, on our way hither, through the comparatively neat and flourishing valley of Taos—and having, moreover, heard much of Santa Fe as a great trading mart—we had drawn freely upon our imaginations, and pictured forth the place as one of neatness and beauty; but, unfortunately for our fanciful creations, we found it what I have described it.

"Well, Alfred," said I, as we plodded our way

through the dirty streets, toward the residence of Governor Armijo—"what do you think of this?"

"That the sooner we leave it the better," was his reply. "If El Doliente has any taste, you will not find him here—nor, for that matter, Adele either."

"I think you are right," I rejoined, "but we must make inquiry in the right quarter."

On reaching the Governor's Palace—as it was termed by way of distinction—we learned, much to our regret, that he and his family had gone to a distant part of the province, and were not expected here for a couple of months at least—his principal residence being at Albuquerque, several leagues further south.

"Then we have had our journey for nothing!" said I, bitterly; "for after what I have seen of these dirty, cut-throat-looking Mexicans, nothing shall tempt me to penetrate further into their miserable country!"

Through our guide—who had, as I have stated, conducted El Doliente hither—we learned that he had remained but a few days with the Governor, and had set off south, with another guide, taking Adele and Cato with him; but what destination he then had in view, no one knew—and I think I venture nothing in adding, no one cared to know. One of the Governor's servants stated to our guide, that he had heard the Spaniard, in conversation with his master, mention New Orleans quite frequently—and inferred that he intended to visit that city—but whether for the purpose of taking up his residence there, or not, he could

not say. This was all the news we could gather of any importance—and this really amounted to nothing.

"Well, Roland, what now?" inquired Varney, in a tone that showed he felt for my disappointment.

"We will start for Independence with the first train that goes out," said I.

Fortunately there was one, of some twenty teams, going to set out on the following day; and having made all our arrangements to accompany it, we had only one night of misery to pass in the loathsome place—a place which, I can truly say, I entered with disgust and left with delight.

I need not dwell upon our long, wearisome journey back to Independence, in the State of Missouri. Suffice, that we passed in safety, though surrounded by perils, over the then cold, bleak, desolate plains; and arrived at our destination, with the snow a foot deep and falling, in the month of January, 18—. Had we been a week later in setting out, we should probably have perished on the prairies—as the snow fell to a great depth, and drifted to a height of twenty feet.

On reaching Independence, though more than two thousand miles distant from my native city, I felt as if I had got within a few steps of home; and had my heart been as free as when I beheld the place for the first time, my delight would have been excessive. As it was, I was glad to get here, and feel that I was once more safe from the perils of the wilderness; my desire to rove beyond the borders had been gratified;

I had seen enough of the Far West and its wild life of adventure; but the thought that Adele—sweet, beautiful Adele—was lost to me for ever, rendered me sad and gloomy, even with the prospect before me of a speedy return to those I had loved with a filial love before loving her.

At the inn where we had stopped on our way out, we found our baggage, all safe, and our clothes in good condition; and we now made as much haste to don civilized attire, as we had then to put on the costume of the mountaineer. But though we were free to acknowledge that our more fashionable apparel improved us externally in a wonderful degree, yet we found it anything but agreeable to get into tight boots, and close-fitting coats, and have stiff, heavy hats pressing upon our foreheads, to say nothing of bungling cravats and starched shirt collars. But knowing as we did that we were about to appear once more among civilized and enlightened people—where fashion rules, and requires all, who would be thought respectable, to sacrifice comfort to external show—we bore our afflictions meekly, and with the resignation of martyrs.

As good luck would have it, the winter, so far, had been mild and open; and on the second day after reaching Independence, we were enabled to get on board of a steamer, bound down the Missouri to St. Louis. It was indeed a most fortunate occurrence for us, and a narrow escape, for the river froze a few days subsequently, and navigation continued closed for two

or three months—which would have compelled us to remain in a not very agreeable frontier settlement, or make a cold, tedious, overland journey of nearly four hundred miles.

"Human life," observed Varney, reflectively, as arm-in-arm we walked up and down the saloon, "is to each individual a world; and what important changes in that world may a few days, or weeks, or months effect? Here now are you and I, Roland, almost at the very point where first we met nearly two years ago—but how changed is the world of each since then!—or rather, how changed is mine!"

"Say how changed to both!" I replied; "for I sadly feel I am not the same man I was then, and therefore see not the world I saw."

"Then," pursued Varney, "I was almost a helpless invalid, struggling for that life, that world, which I have since attained."

"Then," rejoined I, "I had a world of happiness before me, which is now obscured by clouds of gloom. I was almost happy then—I am very far from being happy now."

"In so much do we change places," continued Varney, "that I was unhappy then, but might be happy now, if I could feel assured that one bright, lovely being longs for my return."

"In so much do we change places," I repeated, "that then I had hope, but now feel despondency—you then were despondent, but now have hope."

"But if my hope should fail me, Roland?"

"Then would the changes of our worlds cause us to meet in sympathy on equal ground," said I.

"Oh! if, after all, sweet Mary can never be mine, I shall ever regret that I did not permit my spirit to take its flight in her sweet presence!" almost groaned Varney.

"Adele—pure, confiding Adele—is lost to me for ever!" I rejoined, in a tremulous voice.

"Roland," cried Varney, anxiously, "you must go South with me, and be witness of my happiness or misery."

"To witness your happiness would make me miserable, Alfred—to witness your misery would make me wretched!" I replied. "No, my friend, under the circumstances I would not go with you."

"But I am too selfish to part with you at this trying moment," pursued Varney, earnestly. "I must have *one* friend by me, Roland; and what friend have I, save you, if not her I love? I have worldly friends, Roland—but none of the heart—none to whom I could unbosom my soul, and confide the one great secret of life or death. I have no father, no mother, no sister, no brother but you—you and Mary are my world—my all: I cannot lose you both at once!" and his eyes filled with tears. "You have been with me long, Roland; you know all my weak points—my failings—"

"Say rather I know your virtues, Alfred," I interposed.

"You have stood nobly by me in times of peril,

trial and distress, and you must not part from me now —I cannot have it so. I know I am selfish. I know I am asking a great boon, to take you away from your anxious friends, for even a few days; but happiness is what we all, poor mortals, seek; and it would make me so happy to have you with me!"

"Ask anything else in my power to grant, Alfred, even to the dividing of my fortune, and you shall not ask in vain. And yet," I added, after a moment's reflection, perceiving Varney's disappointed and dejected look, "I hardly know why I would refuse you this simple request!—perhaps because I have so intently fixed my mind upon reaching home in the shortest possible time, and dread to turn aside to look upon new scenes, of which I have seen more than enough—perhaps because my heart is sad and lonely, and I long to get among my friends and look no more upon strange faces for a time. But you turned aside for me, Alfred, and I ought to do this much for you. I could write home, it is true, and assure my parents of my safety."

"Yes!" cried Varney, eagerly, his features brightening with hope; "and oh! I will do everything I can to make the journey pleasant and cheerful!"

"To seek to win my thoughts from Adele, Alfred, would be to labor in vain. Her image is enshrined in my heart, and every beat of that heart brings her before my mental vision. Time may wear off the impression—but I fear there will ever be a void there, which she alone might fill. You know her not, Alfred

—and could never know her as I do: for in our long flight from captivity, surrounded by perils—the happiest days of my existence—I had an opportunity to look down, as it were, into her very soul; and I saw it was pure as an angel's—unstained by even a sinful thought. And now where is she? and what is her fate? Oh! I grow sick at the thought! and become very, very miserable when I think. There is no balm for me but time, Alfred—and time may fail to heal the grief I feel at her loss: I know I can never displace her memory. But enough of this! Where would you have me go, Alfred?"

"First to New Orleans: there I may possibly learn if Mary still lives, and lives for me."

"And what then?"

"If so, we will set off at once for Ingledale—the plantation seat of General Edwards—about fifty miles distant."

"And if not so, Alfred?"

"Then," he said, smothering his emotion, "I know not what."

"You will go home with me?"

"If you desire it."

"Enough, Alfred—I will go!"

He grasped my hand.

"But one proviso," I added.

"Name it."

"If you go to seek your Mary, I return alone."

"Would you not accompany me to Ingledale?"

"I would rather not."

"Be it so then."

"New Orleans!" continued I, musingly. "It was the city mentioned. Oh! if I only dared to hope!"

"You are thinking of what you heard at Santa Fe?" said Varney, inquiringly.

"I am."

"I dare not excite your hope," he replied; "but it may not be impossible."

"Enough! Alfred—enough!—not another word on the subject! I will go with you."

On reaching St. Louis, I immediately addressed a long letter to my father, giving a brief account of my adventures, and stating why I had resolved upon a journey to New Orleans, and about what time I thought it likely I should be in Philadelphia. Then making some purchases—and, among the rest, a wig, resembling as much as possible my natural hair, which had not as yet grown to a proper length—we took the first steamer for New Orleans, where in due time we arrived in safety.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A WONDERFUL DISCOVERY.

On my way to the Crescent City, I had sometimes almost ventured to hope that inquiries at all the boarding establishments and hotels, with a glance in the directory, would give me the name of El Doliente—though I had no more reason for supposing him there, save the inference drawn by the servant of Governor Armijo, than for supposing him in Mexico, Havana, or Madrid. But grant I should find him—what then? Why, then, perhaps, I should discover Adele to be his wife—or him to be a villain—and how much would either add to my happiness? But it would be something to have certainty in place of conjecture; and if I found him to be a villain, it might prove some satisfaction to inflict a merited punishment.

On the morning following our arrival, Varney, who had risen and gone out very early alone, suddenly burst into my room at the hotel, under great excitement, and immediately sunk down upon a seat without uttering a word.

"Good heavens!" cried I—"what is the matter, Alfred? are you ill?"

"In a moment!" he said; "in a moment, Roland!

I am much excited. Mary is here, in the city, with her father."

"Have you seen her?"

"No."

"Have you seen her father?"

"No."

"How do you know they are here?"

"I knew he owned a mansion here—at which he sometimes spent the winter, or a portion of it—and I have just been to see it. I found it occupied, and a servant at work on the pavement. I inquired who lived there, and was answered General Edwards. I trembled and grew faint. The most important question was now to come, and the answer would be life or death.

"'Is his daughter Mary with him?'

"The answer was in the affirmative. I breathed again—but almost gaspingly.

"'Is she married or single?'

"The negro stared at me, and hesitated—evidently wondering what could be the meaning of such a question from a stranger, who looked more mad than sane.

"'I am an old friend, and have been a long time away,' I hastened to add, at the same time slipping a dollar into his hand. 'Quick! boy—speak! is she married or single?'

"'Single, mas'er—t'ank you, sah!' smiled the negro, putting the coin into his pocket.

"I turned short about, Roland, without another

word, and I believe I ran down the street, but I am not sure. At all events, I am here now, and hardly know whether to believe my senses or not. I have not been dreaming, have I, Roland?"

"You appear to be very wide awake now, at all events," I answered, grasping his hand; "and I will venture to congratulate you on your future happiness. Would to Heaven I were as sure of Adele as you are of Mary!"

"But I am not sure, Roland—I have not seen her—and I fairly tremble at the thought of meeting her, and learning my fate."

"If she is alive, and unwedded, you have nothing to fear, Alfred."

'Do you think so?" cried Varney, starting up like a wild man and grasping my hand again. "Do you really think I have nothing to fear?"

"I certainly do. But pray calm yourself! you are more excited than I ever saw you before."

"Because I am nearer joy or despair than I have ever been since you have known me. Believe me, Roland, it were easier for me to bear the pangs of death than disappointment in this."

"But why have you any doubts?"

"Perhaps she does not reciprocate my love!"

"But you have always thought differently!"

"I was far away then, and saw hope dimly in the distance; but now, as I draw near the shining light, I see a thousand intervening obstacles."

"What are they?"

"What I took for affection, may only have been gratitude; and then she is an heiress, while I am only a poor adventurer."

"But love levels all distinctions, Alfred."

"Ay, love, without pride, between the immediate parties, I grant you. But does she love? that is the point. And then her father—would he consent to let her throw herself away upon one little better than a beggar?"

"If he object to you, Alfred, though without a dollar—after the peculiar treatment you received while under his roof—his gratitude for saving her life was false—a base counterfeit!" said I, warmly.

"But though single, she may love another, Roland! Heavens! what a thought!"

"Well, try and be calm; and go, like a man, and learn your fate. Though rich as Crœsus, beautiful as Hebe, chaste as Diana, and pure as an angel, you are worthy of her, Alfred."

"Ay, Roland—were *you* the arbiter of my fate, I should fear nothing—but, unfortunately, others do not hold me in such high esteem. I thank you for the compliment—for I know it comes from your noble heart."

"Well, go and see her—your mind will be harassed and tormented by doubts, fears, and hopes, till you do."

"I will!" said Varney, nervously; "I will go and dress at once; and then ——. But I must not think! Will you accompany me, Roland?"

"No, you had better go alone; and I will occupy myself, meantime, in prosecuting my inquiries concerning El Doliente—though I, at least, have no hope of reward."

Soon after this conversation I went down, ate a light breakfast, and sauntered out alone. The morning was bright and clear—the air soft and spring-like; and as I took my way through the busy streets, I pondered the delights of a southern climate in winter, after a quick journey from the ice-bound regions of the north. I saw green leaves, and I scented flowers; and really felt, to use a poetical figure, as if I had leaped from the rugged shoulders of hoary Winter, into the soft lap of young, smiling, gentle Summer.

I had searched the directory in vain for the name of him I sought; and I now began to visit the different hotels, where I thought it most likely El Doliente might take up his abode while in the city. I spent the day in eager inquiries; and returned to my own quarters at night, sad and dispirited, having obtained no intelligence of him whatever. Varney had not yet returned; and from this I argued he had met with that success which would result in a life-long happiness; and though I rejoiced, for his sake, in his good fortune, I could not but envy him, and feel bitterly wretched when I contrasted his bright fate with mine.

After taking some refreshment, I went up to my room, and threw myself upon the bed, to await his return; but finding I was too miserable to remain

alone, I jumped up, hurried down stairs, and rushed out into the street, feeling as if I wanted air. Hastening along different thoroughfares—taking no heed of my course, and without any definite object in view—unless it might be to escape from myself, or my brain-racking thoughts—I at length found myself one of a fashionably dressed throng of ladies and gentlemen, who were crowding into a large, stately-looking edifice, to hear, as I learned from their conversation, some musical celebrity. Excitement, amusement, anything to drive away thought, was what I wanted; and so I entered with the rest, purchased a ticket, and in due time found myself seated in a large, brilliant hall, where strains of sweet music soon floated to my spirit, and bore it away into an ideal realm of gorgeousness and beauty.

During the whole entertainment, I seemed to be in a kind of trance; but as I felt comparatively happy—and at times absolutely so—deceiving myself with fanciful illusions—I made no effort to arouse myself and return to a cold, bitter reality. In recalling the event at this time, I do not think I was wholly *compos mentis;* for after the grand overture by the orchestra, I remember nothing but bright lights and unearthly music, and airy, floating, fairy forms, and brilliant, gorgeous, heavenly scenes—which fancy brought before the mental vision—till I found myself wedged among the press on my way to the street; after which event all is again distinct and clear. I remember, on reaching the flags of the colonnade, of drawing aside

from the living stream of human beings, and taking a position where, without being too much jostled, I could have a clear view of Creole beauty and fashion, as the human tide poured downward and outward. I was thus standing—admiringly viewing the many beautiful features and forms that floated down the long flight of steps, in the bright light, to disappear in the surrounding shade—when suddenly my eyes rested on a pale, sweet, lovely face; and for a few moments every nerve seemed paralyzed, and my heart rose to my throat.

Could it be? could it be? Great Heaven! could it be? No! it must be fancy—another illusion? I closed my eyes for an instant—only for an instant—for I feared to lose sight of that sweet face. I opened them quickly, and again riveted them upon that descending figure, and upon him who held her arm, and supported her down the long flight, and fondly guided her steps, and strove to keep back the press. No! it was no illusion—it was no portrayal of fancy—it was reality; and, Great God! such a reality! It was my deeply-loved, long-lost Adele Loyola—clinging to, and sustained by, the strong arm of Juan El Doliente.

It was a terrible ordeal, to stand paralyzed, and see them pass me, without even the power of speech—and my brain reeled, and my sight grew dim. At length, with a convulsive gasp, I regained the power of motion, and sprung after them, regardless of everything and everybody around. Like a madman—as perhaps

for the time I was—I plunged into the crowd, and pushed forward to the street, with more than one anathema following me from those I jostled roughly or put rudely aside. I was just in time to see the two I sought enter a splendid carriage, which was decorated with a coat of arms, and had a black driver and footman in rich livery. In my haste to reach the door before it closed, I stumbled and fell; and by the time I had regained my feet, the footman was mounted, and the carriage was in motion. Fearful of losing sight of it, I ran into the street, and shouted for a hack.

"Here, mas'er, at you sarbis," cried a black, from the opposite side of the way.

"Do you see that carriage yonder, with its footman in livery, just turning the corner?" said I, springing to the negro, who was hastily opening the door of his vehicle.

"Yes, sah—see dat cl'ar."

"Quick, then! mount your box, and put me down near where that stops, and it shall prove the best job you have done for a month! Quick, now! or you will lose sight of it!"

"Nebber fear dis chile, mas'er," rejoined the negro, as he grasped the lines and cracked his whip.

So far I had been governed wholly by impulse, and had considered nothing but the fact that I must not lose sight of Adele and the Spaniard till I had traced them to their present quarters; but now I had a few minutes for reflection, and reflection came in a

way to cause me mental torture. I leaned back in the carriage, and thought, till my brain ached, my vision swam, and blue lights danced before my eyes. What was I to do, on reaching El Doliente's residence? what would be the proper course for me to pursue? Undoubtedly it would be best to first ascertain if Adele were his wife; and if so, to retire and not make myself known; and return to my misery, and leave them to their happiness, if happiness they could find. But if she were not his wife? If not?—Good heavens! how my blood boiled to think!—then must she be the victim of a treacherous villain; for only by lying and treachery could he have turned so pure a heart from the path of virtue. Ha! another idea. Perhaps he knew her history? Well, what then? this could not sanction crime. But might he not be a relative? Improbable, in the extreme—for had he discovered any relationship, what more natural, or likely, than that he would have proclaimed it at Bent's Fort? There was something very strange and mysterious in his taking such an interest in the girl before he saw her; and I remembered asking him if he were in love with her from my description, and his reply, that he should never be my rival for her hand. What could it all mean? But I should soon know, perhaps; and should I discover he had wronged and ruined her, then, as the law could not reach him, I determined I would be her avenger. It would be a fearful thing to become judge and executioner, I knew; but in the state of mind I then was, I felt it would be

necessary, if he were guilty, for one of us to quit the human stage of life. Adele, in any event, I considered lost to me for ever.

Such was a portion of the thoughts and reflections that produced the effect I have described; and my mind was still in a wild whirl, when the carriage suddenly stopped, and the driver hastily opened the door.

"Dar, mas'er," said the negro, "you can see de carriage I's followed, right over dar."

I sprung out, and found myself standing in a broad, clean, elegant street, with splendid private mansions on either hand. About twenty rods distant, on the opposite side of the way, was the carriage of El Doliente; and while I looked, I saw him and Adele ascend the marble steps, and the vehicle drive away.

"You have done well," said I, handing the negro a gold eagle; "and this will prove to you that I made no empty promise."

"De Lor' bress you, mas'er, for a true gent'lem!" cried the black, opening his eyes with delight.

"Mount, and drive straight on, as if nothing had happened!" I added.

And as the hack rolled away, I crossed the street and walked leisurely along, till I came opposite the residence which now contained the beings who had already been so closely linked with my destiny, and whose influence for good or evil it was my fate to feel evermore. When I reached the steps, they had disappeared within; and I looked up at the stately

edifice, with its marble colonnade and iron balconies, and knew that its owner must be a man of wealth—perhaps of distinction, fashion, and power—and I reflected, that if I would meet him as an equal, man to man, there might never be a more opportune time than the present. I felt for my pistols—which, from my late habit of always going armed, I had not yet laid aside—and finding them in their proper places, I ascended the steps—determined, for the rest, to be guided by such circumstances as fate might throw around me.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

I LOOKED at the silver plate on the door, and, by the light of the street lamp, read the single name of "ALVAREZ."

I started, and trembled with excitement. What if, after all, the negro had mistaken the carriage? I hastily rung the bell.

"Does a gentleman reside here, named Juan El Doliente?" I inquired of the liveried servant who answered my summons.

"No, sah—don't know no such gent'lem!" was the courteous, but somewhat consequential reply; and the sleek negro held the door in a way to denote he was

prepared to shut it the moment I might think proper to retire.

It may be he has changed his name, or resumed his right one, I mused, not a little perplexed and agitated.

"Will you be good enough to answer me a few questions?" said I, slipping a silver coin into the hand of the black.

"Sartin, sah—wid pleasure," he quickly replied, in a changed tone, letting the door swing back, and thus disclosing to my view a long, high, lighted hall, richly furnished.

"I am seeking a gentleman who once did me an essential service," I resumed; "but as he was rather an eccentric personage, he may have changed his name. It is possible your master may know something of him—if, as I infer from the name, he is a Spanish gentleman, and countryman of this El Doliente!"

"Shall I 'quire ob mas'er?" queried the black.

"A question or two first. How long have you served your present master?"

"'Bout a year, I 'spect."

"Is he a married man?"

"No, sah."

The answer produced in me a very singular sensation—a sensation I cannot define. I commanded my feelings, as well as I could, and continued:

"How long has he resided in this city?"

"He's been here seberal time, sah—but he only bought dis place jus' afore I come to lib wid him."

"Has he traveled much?"

"Great deal, sah, I 'spect."

"Has he ever been in Mexico?"

"Yes, sah—he come from dat dar way last."

"Do you know whether he was ever out on the prairies among the Indians?"

"Yes, sah—dat's whar he's been too, sah—he's been most ebery whar, sah!"

"Enough!" said I, finding that my feelings were getting the mastery of my will. "Will you now be so obliging as to inform him, that a gentleman desires a few minutes' conversation with him in private?"

"Yes, sah—I'll tell him. What name shall I's say, sah?"

I hesitated a moment, and replied:

"No matter about the name; but merely say a gentleman who once knew him in another part of the world."

"Yes, sah—please step into de drawing-room and I'll tell him, sah!"

"Thank you; but I would prefer to wait here till you bring me an answer."

"Yes, sah—jus' as you please."

With strange feelings, and not a little external agitation, I now stepped into the mansion, and stood, as I believed, under the same roof with Adele Loyola. The negro closed the outer door, and hastened away; and there were a few minutes of suspense, during which I mentally suffered as I hope never to suffer again. At length I saw him hastily descending a

long, spiral stairway, at the far end of the hall; and a sudden weakness came over me, and I leaned against the wall for support.

"Dis way, sah!" he said, apparently not perceiving my agitation.

I summoned all my vital forces to my aid, and quietly followed him. On reaching the second-story, he threw open a door to the right, and ushered me into a large, elegant library, with the single remark:

"Mas'er will soon be wid you, sah!"

I sent a quick, searching glance around, by a rather dim light, which came from a large chandelier. Three sides of the apartment were occupied with book-cases, well filled; and the fourth was adorned by several large, beautiful paintings. There was a writing desk, open, with papers lying loose upon it; and there were three or four large, elegantly stuffed arm-chairs; in one of which I hastened to seat myself, as far from the light as possible, and facing the door by which the host must enter.

He came, even sooner than I wished; and I saw, at a glance, he was no other than Juan El Doliente. For a moment I felt as if I should faint; but I thought of the wrongs of Adele, and instantly my nerves became as iron. I was resolved, and felt sufficiently desperate to make my resolution effective.

He approached me, with a look of curiosity, and I arose to meet him.

"I have the honor, I believe, of addressing Juan El Doliente?" I said, in a cold, firm tone.

He slightly started, and looked surprised.

"I have been so called," he answered. "May I, in return, sir, have the honor of knowing the name of him who addresses me?"

"You do not know me then?"

The light was not bright where I stood, and I purposely kept my features as much in the shade as possible.

"Your face seems to have a familiar look," he answered, eyeing me closely; "but I do not know where to place you, or by what name to address you. I am almost certain, however, we have met before."

"I am quite certain," I rejoined, "that you have seen me in reality, and perhaps in your dreams."

"This is somewhat strange language," he observed, a little haughtily. "If you do not choose to give me your name, will you be kind enough to state your business?"

"I will do both, sir," returned I, with heat. "As for my name, I am at present to be known as *The Avenger;* as to my business, I am here to make my name good."

"You talk enigmatically," he rejoined, the blood mounting to his temples.

"Then allow me to say you are a villian, sir!" I cried. "Do you understand that? or will you have it in plainer English?"

Instantly the blood retreated, his features turned pale, his dark eyes flashed, and his thin lips quivered.

"I know not what object you may have in thus

insulting me in my own dwelling," he quickly replied; "but I warn you, young man, not to trust too much to my forbearance—for I am human, and not always master of my passions! I will bid you good evening, and one of my servants will show you the way to the street."

He turned, as if to leave the apartment; but I sprung before him to the door; and ere he divined my purpose, I had closed and set my back against it.

"What do you want? are you mad?" he demanded, looking perplexed and astonished, and evidently feeling some degree of alarm.

"Perhaps I am mad!" I rejoined; "but what I want is, a settlement with you for a most damnable act? You see I am a desperate man! and am prepared for a desperate deed!" I continued, producing my pistols. "Now mark me, Juan El Doliente! we are alone together, and must remain so till this affair is settled. Attempt to ring a bell, or otherwise call for help, and you are a dead man. What I want first is, that you do answer me truly, as you hope for life, or fear death, two questions."

"Speak!" he said, growing much excited.

"First, then—are you a married man?"

"I have been."

"But now? I mean now?"

"I am not—my sweet wife is in Heaven!" and his voice trembled.

"Now, then," continued I, "the most important question of the two: Is Adele Loyola your victim?"

"Adele Loyola my *victim?*" he repeated, taking a step or two backward, his features expressive of the most unbounded amazement. "Good God! what do you mean? who are you?"

"No stage attitudes and show tricks shall cover your black-hearted villany!" cried I, desperately grasping my weapons. "Answer me, as you will one day answer your Maker! Is Adele Loyola your victim?"

"Tell me, then, what you mean? and how I am to answer?" he rejoined, in much agitation.

"I mean, then, have you seduced her from the path of virtue? and ruined her like a villain? and you are to answer truly, as God is your judge!"

"Seduced and ruined *my own daughter?* Great God forbid!" he cried.

"*How?* exclaimed I, hardly able to credit my senses, and feeling my brain reel, as the truth, mighty and overpowering, flashed upon me. "*Your daughter*, say you? Adele Loyola your *daughter?*"

"I see how it is!" he cried; "you knew her when she was a friendless wanderer—and by a name that was not her own—and hence this mistake."

"But you are not deceiving me?"

"As I hope for salvation, no! Let me call her if you doubt, and hear her confirm my words."

The pistols fell from my hands; and reeling to a seat, I sunk down upon it, faint, and half suffocated with a whirl of contending emotions.

"I am a fool—an idiot—a madman!" I gasped, as

Alvarez hastened to my relief. "I have wronged you, sir—deeply, bitterly wronged you—and I pray your forgiveness for the almost fatal mistake."

"You have my forgiveness, with all my heart," he said, in a kindly and sympathetic tone.

"I know much of her history, and something of yours," I continued—"enough of both to credit your assertion."

"But, in Heaven's name, pray tell me who you are?" he cried, much excited,

"I am Roland Rivers."

"Great God!" he ejaculated—"is it possible? Let me look! Here—turn your face to the light! Yes—yes—it *is* Roland Rivers: I see your features now, as I saw them on the prairie. But you are so changed, I might not have known you, even had I known you to be living. But we all thought you dead; and Marina has done nothing but mourn your loss. How wonderful! how strange! how wonderful! how strange!" and repeating these words, he sunk upon a seat, and stared at me as one stupefied with amazement. "Oh, my dear friend!" he cried, suddenly springing up and embracing me—"this will be a night of joy to my poor Marina!"

"To whom?" inquired I, not comprehending him.

"To my dear, long lost daughter Marina—to her you knew as Adele."

"Then Adele was not her name?"

"No more than that villain Loyola was her father.

Henceforth, Roland, you must know her as Marina Alexa Helena de Alvarez, Countess of Zamora."

"A Countess!" exclaimed I; "poor Adele a Countess! I am all amazement!"

"As well you may be, my friend. God's Providence has worked wonders in all our lives; and I know not who is most amazed, you or I. Do you know, I am almost afraid to leave the apartment, lest on my return I shall find you vanished into thin air, and myself the sport of a delusion."

"It gives me joy unspeakable to know I am so esteemed by one whom but now I called a villain," said I; "but I assure you, you need not fear of finding me a substantial reality for the present—though perhaps not altogether a rational being."

For a few minutes we remained together, absorbed in wonder—neither saying much—but that little, in a very slight degree, expressive of our inexpressible thoughts and emotions.

"I am eager to hear you relate your remarkable adventures," at length said Alvarez, "and to learn how you traced me hither!"

"And I to learn something of your remarkable history," I rejoined; "but first let me look upon the sweet face of Adele; and then we will exchange stories; and acknowledge, with humble, soul-felt thankfulness, there is a Power that guards and guides which is incomprehensible to finite beings."

Alvarez crossed himself, bowed his head in silent prayer, and rejoined:

"Call her not Adele, my friend—for the name was bestowed by a villain, and revives painful recollections."

"But she will always be Adele to me," I said—"for by that name she won my heart. However, I will compromise. I will think of her as Adele, and call her Marina. But pray let me behold her once more!"

"Stay you here, and I will go and prepare her to receive you."

"Nay, do not that—but introduce me as a traveller—a whilom companion of yours. I would test her power of recognition: it may be no better than your own."

"Trust love for that," he rejoined, with a smile. "I only fear the shock of discovery may produce unpleasant consequences."

"Have I then really such a hold upon her heart?"

"Marina, like her sainted mother," he replied, in a tremulous voice, "is a being to love but once, for love is her life. How she loves you, Roland Rivers, you will soon ascertain. And my friend, (grasping my hand,) you deserve her love—you are worthy of her—and you are the only being on the face of this earth to whom I would speak these words. Nay, no self-disparagement! I know with what self-sacrifice—with what nobility of soul—you saved her; and how you watched over her, with the care of a father, or brother, in your long, perilous flight from captivity; I know all; and now I am ready to shed tears of joy,

that you are about to reap your reward; and that the two and only beings I truly love on earth, are about to be made happy, I trust for ever. But I will bring Marina hither, and let love take its course, if you will promise to be guarded and prudent in making yourself known."

"Trust me, I will."

"The light shall remain dim till you have tested the eyes of love," he said, with a smile, and left the apartment.

I leaned back, and fancied I could hear the beatings of my heart till the door again opened, and then it seemed as if every organ of my system had suddenly ceased motion.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE FINALE.

Dona Marina, Countess of Zamora, entered the apartment with ease and grace, hanging lightly on the arm of her noble father. I arose, as a stranger, to salute her; but trembled so, that I dared not take a single step forward; and really feared I should be compelled to resume my seat in a manner which would appear extremely awkward, if not rude. She was richly, but plainly, attired in the prevailing fashion; and her dark features—naturally pale, and

tinged with melancholy, but now slightly tinted with a rosy hue—were so sweet, so lovely, that I was on the point of forgetting myself, springing forward, and disclosing all, by uttering the loved name of Adele. The Count read my feelings, and, fearful of consequences, hastened forward and said:

"Senor Rios, allow me to present to you my daughter Marina, of whom you have heard me speak."

I bowed, without trusting my voice; and Marina, making a graceful salutation, took a seat near. The Count quietly drew up another chair, and we both sat down—he, to relieve us of any embarrassment, immediately observing:

"I have informed my daughter, Senor Rios, that we once met, far away, and were fellow travellers for several days."

"That meeting and that journey I shall never forget," I replied, quietly.

At the first sound of my voice, Marina started—all color instantly forsook her face—and she turned her soft, dark eyes, now sparkling with a wild light, searchingly upon me.

"I understand," I pursued, addressing her with as much calmness as it was possible for me to command on so exciting an occasion—"I understand that your ladyship has passed through some eventful scenes?"

She looked wildly at me, and then at the Count, and exclaimed:

"My dear father, who is it that speaks?"

"Whom do you think, my child?"

"If the grave can give back the dead to the living, it is Roland Rivers."

"The grave cannot, sweet daughter," he replied, anxiously; "but the grave does not always hold the lost."

"Great Heaven! it is then Roland Rivers!" she cried, springing to her feet, and looking still more wildly at me. "Senor Rios! Senor Rios! Yes! yes! it is!"

"It is, Adele," said I, using her former name, and making an attempt to rise.

She uttered one wild shriek, fell upon my neck, and fainted in my arms.

"I fear we have killed her!" cried her now half-distracted father, hastening to ring for her attendants.

A scene of confusion ensued that I need not describe. It was more than an hour before all again became quiet; and then Marina was sitting by my side, her hands clasped with joy, and her dark eyes, beaming love, fixed fondly and intently upon mine, as if she feared, as her father had before expressed, that I might vanish into thin air. As for myself, I have no language to portray the emotions which stirred me to the very depths of my innermost soul. I can only say, that I seemed to myself like a part and portion of an enchantment that was painful with rapture.

Oh! the golden hours of that night of joy—how swiftly they flew! I told the story of my captivity,

my return, my suspicions, and my madness, even up to the moment of my present happiness; and Marina listened, and wept—wept tears of such joy as comes up from the inner soul but once in a human life.

"Dear Roland," she at last exclaimed, with tearful eyes, "what guarded, guided, and brought us together so mysteriously? Will you say now you do not believe in ministering spirits?"

"With you by my side, dear Marina, I am ready to believe in everything pure and holy," I replied.

Having ordered refreshments, my noble host now began and told his tale—which, though strange, thrilling, and romantic, I shall take the liberty to abridge, and give in the fewest words possible. He was a nobleman by birth, a native of Spain, and his rightful name was Don Juan Alvaro de Alvarez, Count of Zamora. He had a princely residence and retinue in his native country, was in high favor at Court, and married the lady of his choice, by whom he had one child, a daughter, the lovely being who has figured in my narrative as Adele. All went on prosperously and happily till the loss of his child, who was stolen at a tender age by a villain named Romanez, and the same who has slightly figured in my narrative as Gaspard Loyola. This Romanez was an officer in the household of the Count, who was discharged for a flagrant act, and took this mode of revenge. And a terrible revenge it proved; for the wife of the Count died subsequently, of a disease engendered by grief at the loss of her daughter; and the Count himself, half

distracted at the loss of both, sold his effects—and, to find some relief to an aching heart, became a traveller and a wanderer, assuming the expressive title of Juan El Doliente, or Juan The Sufferer. He had visited this country more than once in his wandering life; and had, at different times, for a brief period, made his home in New Orleans. But the canker at his heart would never let him rest; and so he had continued to wander, wherever he thought he could meet with excitement or novelty, till chance or Providence threw him in my way, and he heard my story of Adele, whom he was fain to think might possibly prove to be his long lost daughter. This idea was the cause of that intense excitement which he exhibited on hearing my narrative, and which then proved so incomprehensible to me, who of course knew nothing of the real facts. My description of Loyola was a correct description, he thought, of Romanez; and being eager to see the girl, and learn the truth, he volunteered to fit out an expedition to go in quest of her; but fearing he might be disappointed, he hardly trusted himself to hope, and kept his secret to himself.

Why Romanez, or Loyola, placed Marina in a convent in Mexico, was still something of a mystery; but it was conjectured that, she being very young at the time, and probably a burden to him, he had thought this a feasible plan to have her taken care of till she should arrive at an age to be of some assistance to him. And it was further surmised, that it might have been his intention, at a period subsequent to my

meeting with her, to disclose all, and force her to become his wife, with the idea of eventually turning this to his account in a pecuniary point of view. Be this as it may, it will readily be seen that he *had* a motive in not destroying her life, and in allowing her no opportunity to disclose what little she did know of her history. On placing her in the convent, he had given her the name of Adele, and changed his own, asserting that he was her father, and that her own mother was dead. After taking her away, he had always kept her with him, and made her useful to him in the business he had adopted, which was that of an itinerant trader. Of his harsh, brutal treatment I need not speak, as the reader himself had a specimen on his first introduction, in propria persona, into my story.

On meeting with his daughter on the mountains, as mentioned by Botter, Alvarez saw at a glance a strong resemblance to her beloved mother; but still fearing there might be some mistake, he smothered his emotions, and kept his secret, till he found a proper opportunity to reveal it to her at St. Vrain's Fort. This revelation caused that marked change in her demeanor toward him, which led the old mountaineer to suspect a different cause for the intimacy, and the scandal-mongers to start the villanous report which reached me through him. As the Count and his daughter both thought it proper to find the convent where she had been educated, and get further facts before proclaiming their relationship, they set off

together in the manner stated, and made no mention of it at Bent's Fort, or any other place through which they passed, preferring to let the evil-minded think and say what they pleased, and all parties draw their own conclusions.

I will pass over the long, anxious journey into Mexico, and merely state that the convent of Santa Maria was at last found, and some new facts gathered; and these facts, taken in connection with some personal marks of identity, and the strong resemblance Adele bore to the deceased Countess, were sufficient to induce the forlorn Count to claim, and proclaim, her as his long lost daughter Marina. Hastening from the convent of Santa Maria to Vera Cruz, they sailed for New Orleans, where the Count immediately purchased his present dwelling, furniture, servants, etc., and established his residence, resolved to make this his future home—but where, after all, as he himself expressed it, in conclusion, the presence of myself was needed to complete the happiness of his lovely daughter. With this explanation, I trust the reader will find I have closed up all points that in the course of my story may have seemed mysterious, and which at first view may have been regarded as having no direct bearing upon the *denouement.*

It was already broad day-light when I left the mansion of Don Alvaro and his lovely daughter to return to my hotel. They pressed me to stay longer, and were loth to part from me even for a moment; but I knew that Marina needed rest, after a sleepless night

of such wild excitement; and I knew that Varney, if he had returned, would be greatly troubled at my absence; so I tore myself away, promising to return to dinner. How changed were my feelings, as I now hurried through the streets, from those I had experienced but a few short hours before? Then I was almost mad with gloom and despair—now almost wild with rapture! Truly, the age of a human being should be reckoned by *events*—not *years*.

As I expected, I found Varney laboring under great excitement from several causes—not the least important of which was my own unaccountable absence.

"My dear Roland," he cried, grasping my hand, "where have you been? and what has happened? You look weary and pale!"

"It is well if I look no worse," I replied, with a solemn air—for I felt in the mood to mystify him a little before making known to him my good fortune.

"In Heaven's name! what has happened? You have not been here during the whole night; and I have been tortured with a thousand wild surmises!" he cried.

"And how much of the night have you been here?" I asked in return. "I was here the first part, I know, but I was too gloomy to remain alone; so I rushed out, and became the hero of one of the most remarkable adventures on record."

"Explain, Roland!"

"Rather let me hear your report first. Did you see Mary Edwards?"

"I did, God bless her!" he exclaimed, joyfully.

"Well, she is yours?"

"She is, my dear friend! she is!" he cried, excitedly, grasping my hand, and struggling to keep down his emotions. "Oh! my dear Roland, I am half mad with joy—and God knows how my heart swells with gratitude for all His mercies and blessings! Yes, I found her more beautiful even than I remembered her; and, would you believe it, my more than brother, she was actually mourning my absence. Her joy at seeing me returned in health completely overcame her; and her father, as he grasped my hand, cried like a child. I returned here at twelve, the most happy being living; and all the sorrow I have since felt was on your account. Forgive me, my friend, for pouring into your ear this joyful news in such a wild, heedless manner! and believe me, through it all I deeply sympathize with you in your irreparable loss. Oh! if Heaven had only willed that you might be blessed with Adele, as I am with Mary, what earthly happiness would then equal ours?"

"I thank you for your sympathy, Alfred; and really congratulate you with all my heart!" I rejoined, vigorously shaking his hand.

"And now tell me of yourself, Roland! You say you have had a remarkable adventure?"

'I have indeed. Let us be seated—I am fatigued. Well, you must know, that, after quitting you in the morning, I began my search for El Doliente—but returned at night, as I had expected, without finding

any trace of him whatever. After a slight repast, I came up to my room here, to wait for you—but found myself so miserable as to be obliged to seek the open air for relief. Not caring whither my steps might lead me, I set off hurriedly through the streets; and at last, unexpectedly, got wedged among a throng of people, who were going to listen to some musical celebrity, whose name I do not even now know. I entered the hall with the rest, and sat through the entertainment in a sort of trance. On coming out, I stationed myself where I could get a good view of Creole fashion and beauty; and there remained till my eye fell upon a face more lovely than all the rest—at least I thought so, you understand—and which so stirred me that I determined to follow her home. Her companion was a gentleman who might be her father, brother, husband, or lover, for anything that I knew—but this did not deter me from carrying out my design. On reaching the street they took a carriage—my divinity and her companion, you perceive—and I took another, ordering the driver to put me down wherever they might stop. Well, they halted before an elegant mansion, and went in, and I followed them."

"Not into the mansion, Roland?" cried Varney, in astonishment.

"Ay, but I did, though, even into the mansion, my friend! Do not look so astonished, Alfred! I am telling you the truth—and am perfectly sane now—though whether I was at that precise time, is some-

what doubtful; but, at all events, I felt very desperate, and gave little thought to appearances or consequences."

"Mad as a loon!" exclaimed Varney; "you must have been! or you would never have dared to carry matters so far. I am astonished!"

"I believe you, my friend, for you show it in your looks—but you will be more astonished yet, when you hear the whole of my story."

"But how did you get into the dwelling?"

"I asked to see the master, and gave the servant some money."

"Well, they turned you out?"

"Not exactly, or I should have been here sooner. But pray do not anticipate—for you could not guess the truth, if you were to occupy all the time between this and your coming nuptials."

"Roland," cried Varney, anxiously, looking at me in an earnest, singular manner—"are you really sure you are sane now?"

"Perfectly—do you doubt it?"

"You certainly talk very strangely."

"Well, I have had cause; but as you seem determined not to let me finish my story, you may as well guess the rest, while I lie down and rest myself;" and as I spoke, I threw myself upon the bed.

"No, no, Roland—forgive me! Go on, and tell your singular story in your own way! I will not interrupt you again."

"Ten dollars to one that you do! But no matter

—you shall hear all. Well, I was shown into the gentleman's library, where he shortly made his appearance; and after closing the door, and putting my back against it, I drew my pistols, threatened his life, and in an indirect way accused him of seducing the young lady from the path of virtue."

"Roland," exclaimed Varney, jumping up from his chair, "if you are really telling me the truth now, I only wonder you are here to tell it, instead of being locked up in the calaboose."

"There, I knew I would win!" said I: "you cannot possibly let me tell my story without interruption."

"Any reasonable story I could!" cried Varney; "but this is outrageous. Follow a strange lady home! go into a strange gentleman's house! and actually threaten his life, and accuse him of wrong and dishonor! Heavens! what next? But I suppose he took you for a stray lunatic, and so let you go?"

"He did better, if you will only listen. He was horrified at my accusation; and informed me that the young lady was his daughter; and, more than that, an heiress, and a Spanish Countess; and on my requesting to see her, he brought her in, introduced her to me, and we spent the night in very agreeable conversation. And, what is still more to the purpose, I am desperately in love with her; and we are to be married shortly, with the consent of her father, Don Juan Alvaro de Alvarez, Count of Zamora."

I shall never forget the expression of Varney's fea-

tures as I came to the conclusion. It was not easy to determine which predominated—grief or horror—as he fixed his eyes upon me, and muttered:

"Poor fellow! poor fellow! now I know he has lost his senses. Despair has driven him mad. What a terrible blow this will be to his parents!"

"Come," pursued I, "where are your congratulations? Why do you not grasp my hands and wish me much joy, as I did you? If it is such a happy event for you to get married, why not also for me?"

"Lie down, Roland, my dear friend!" he said, in a kindly, sympathetic tone; "lie down and rest yourself; you are greatly fatigued; and I think rest will do you good."

"And is this all you have to say to an old friend, who has stood by you through many a peril and trial, when he tells you he is about to marry Dona Marina Alexa Helena de Alvarez, Countess of Zamora?" cried I. "Fie! Alfred—I thought better of you."

"Oh! merciful Heaven!" groaned poor Varney, the perspiration standing in beads on his pale face; "this is terrible! this is terrible! poor fellow! poor fellow!" and he sunk heavily upon his seat.

"Perhaps you are envious of my good fortune?" said I.

"No, God knows I am not, my dear fellow."

"Well, there is one thing," I continued, "I have neglected to mention. Undoubtedly it will not cause you to cease your astonishment—but I think it will clear me of being in your estimation *non compos mentis.*

I have so far neglected to tell you, that Don Juan Alvaro de Alvarez, Count of Zamora, and his lovely daughter, Dona Marina Alexa Helena de Alvarez, Countess of Zamora, are no other than Juan El Doliente and Adele Loyola!"

"What!" cried Varney, springing up so suddenly as to upset his chair and a table on which his arm was resting: "You do not mean to say—Good Heavens!—Roland—you—I am—choking—you—are not—mad then?"

"Not quite so mad as you are, poor fellow!" said I, with a hearty burst of laughter.

"And—and—heavens! you are in earnest?"

"Assuredly I am: earnest in having told the truth—earnest in having had my joke."

"And—you—have really—found Adele and El Doliente?"

"Found them as father and daughter—Count and Countess—that is, if you allow a daughter to be a Countess while her father the Count is living."

Varney bounded forward, grasped my hand, and nearly wrung it off; and then sat down and cried for joy.

* * * * * *

There is little more to add, to complete the narrative of my adventures—for it was never my design, dear reader, to take you through all the scenes of my life. If you are pleased and satisfied with what you have received, we shall part friends; but whether you are

satisfied or not, we shall soon part, to meet no more on the stage of life.

I remained two weeks in the Crescent City; and every day, in the society of her I loved, my happiness seemed to increase, till I felt my soul filled with a rapture that banished even the thought of sorrow and gloom. At last, on a bright, glorious day—attended by Alfred Varney and Mary Edwards, and many of the elite of the capital of fashion, wealth and beauty—I led her to the sacred altar of her faith; and there, in the presence of a large concourse of spectators, the holy rite was solemnized, which bound us together, here and hereafter, in time and in eternity, on earth and in the heavens; and the great organ of the vast cathedral pealed its joy; and on its sweet, solemn music our happy souls seemed to float upward into the realms elysian.

"Roland! Marina!" said the Count, on taking leave of us, as he held a hand of each, while his eyes rained tears, and his voice trembled with emotions of joy; "may the great and good God, and all his saints and ministering spirits, ever watch over you, prosper you, and bless you, even as I do now bless you with a father's love. My dream is now fulfilled. You remember, Roland, how I told you, in yon far wilderness, that I had had a dream, that filled my soul with ecstacy, and which might become a reality even as my soul saw it. You have seen it, and been a part of it—and so has my sweet daughter Marina—God bless

you both! And now, hard as it is to part, I must for a season, I trust a brief season, say farewell!"

On the very day of my marriage, I left New Orleans for my northern home; where in due time I arrived, and filled the hearts of my parents and friends with joy.

Many years have passed since then, and I have more than once crossed the great deep in company with my still lovely wife and her noble father; and I have even stood in the venerable halls where Marina passed her infancy, and have seen that picture of a happy home which she drew from memory at our first meeting in the wilderness. Surrounded now with a loving wife, and blooming children, and pleasant friends, I am still happy, whether my time be spent in my northern or my southern home: and I need only add, that Alfred Varney finds a happiness which equals mine—it could no more.

And now, kind reader—you who have been with me out upon the great prairies, and among the great mountains—and have seen nature in her wildness, freedom, beauty and grandeur—where man, untamed as the beast, roams at will, and rules physically rather than intellectually; you who have witnessed strange scenes, and thrilling scenes, in which I have played an humble part; and have returned with me to the haunts of civilization, and have seen brighter scenes, and happier scenes; and have ever lent me your kindly sympathy—sorrowing with me in my sorrow, and rejoicing with me in my joy,—to you I must now

say farewell. That you may ever surmount all obstacles which lie in your pathway of life, and reach the loftiest summit of your hopes and aspirations, and behold the sun of joy pouring upon you the light of an eternal day, is the prayer of him who now bids you a final adieu!

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